United Nations A/S-22/PV.2

General Assembly
Twenty-second special session

Official Records

2nd plenary meeting
Monday, 27 September 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Adada (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Carlos Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Veiga (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Through you, Sir, we wish to thank the General Assembly for its timely decision to devote this special plenary session to those of its members that are small island developing States. By so doing, the United Nations reaffirms not only that all its Members, large or small, advantaged or disadvantaged, have a voice and a vote in its deliberations, but also that all of them, in accordance with their respective needs, deserve the attention and solidarity of their international partners.

The special nature of the constraints affecting the development of small island States was recognized in the Rio Declaration that was the culmination of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. And rightly so, since small island States, regardless of their location, do indeed have special environmental characteristics and problems.

Two years later, in 1994, the Declaration and Programme of Action resulting from the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, gave us a comprehensive, integrated set of recommendations that provide a genuine blueprint for the efforts of our States and of the international community in general to promote the development of small island States.

It should be recognized that these States have assumed their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action with seriousness and a sense of ownership, and even under difficult conditions have made considerable efforts to implement it. This is a necessary condition for the progress and survival of our States. But, in addition, scattered over five oceans and seas, we recognize that we are the custodians of large areas of the world's oceans, that are important to humankind and have a large share of global biodiversity. Moreover, it is the islands that are most vulnerable to the global threat of uncontrolled climate change.

All of these factors provide powerful arguments and strong motivation for a genuine, rich and diversified partnership between our countries and the international community of which we are members. Furthermore, with respect to the environment, perhaps more directly than in many other areas, the world reacts as the single entity that it is. The small island developing States' acute

00-40432 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

awareness of the consequences of this fact has led them to participate actively in the search for solutions and commitments within the various international forums in order to address more effectively the common problems and challenges facing humankind.

The number of small island States at the United Nations, meanwhile, has increased with the recent addition of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as Members — a happy development for their category of States. We welcome dearly these three countries.

At the same time, we wish to convey our appreciation to the Government of Samoa, which currently occupies the chairmanship of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and to the other countries that, under that Government's coordination, have worked with wisdom, competence and devotion to demonstrate our informal group's usefulness to the international community, their scarce resources notwithstanding.

Five years after the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and following a preparatory process whose quality and spirit of cooperation we wish to emphasize, this special session of the General Assembly will adopt two important documents: a declaration and a document on the state of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. These documents renew our political will, update its expression, analyse past achievements, place the situation in perspective and clarify in the medium term the balance between that which is desirable and that which seems achievable through our endeavours.

We believe that this exercise will help our small States increase and improve the effectiveness of their own efforts, and that it will encourage their international partners to place a higher value on our cooperation for mutual benefit. This is a necessity. Nothing can be gained by ignoring the fact that resources allocated to international cooperation with the small island States in many areas, including those of finance, technology and trade, have been insufficient. Thus, the Commission on Sustainable Development has provided eloquent statistics that demonstrate that between 1994, when the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted, and 1997, net transfers to our countries; rather than rising, fell by 17 per cent. This has had obvious consequences for our capacity to implement strategies for sustainable development.

In this context, the so-called targeted implementation of the Programme of Action becomes something of a euphemism, since, at least in part, the selection is dictated by the lack of resources to carry out the necessary programmes.

Nevertheless, we do not question the priorities established, which currently include the areas of climate change, natural disasters, water resources, marine and coastal resources, energy and tourism. These are indeed critical areas in which the small island States face major constraints, and they would benefit greatly from overcoming them.

In one of these areas — water resources — my country faces a very serious long-standing problem. Drought, once cyclic in Cape Verde, has been a permanent condition there for the past 20 years. The deep-rooted tenacity of the Cape Verdean people is the source of their capacity to respond and adapt to the adverse conditions of their environment.

However, persistent drought has placed a continuous drain on a significant portion of the country's scarce resources, which are needed to finance the costly expansion of desalination programmes for sea water and ground water and the annual renewal of public works programmes in the agricultural areas most severely affected by this scourge.

In apparent contradiction of the special constraints that the small island developing States face, several of them display relatively acceptable human development indicators and even per capita gross national products. This progress has sometimes been used to justify sudden cuts in official development assistance to our countries, which are particularly disastrous at crucial times, such as when we are endeavouring to consolidate and give sustainability to our new development prospects.

This disturbing trend, which penalizes our countries for their efforts, merely confirms the extent to which the socio-economic reality of the small island States, the subtle interrelationship between the factors affecting them and, above all, their enormous vulnerability, remains misunderstood. The tendency to take decisions with drastic implications for small island States on the basis of a cursory glance at certain statistics can be no less than catastrophic for them.

Failure to take seriously the fragility of small island States' socio-economic equilibrium can destroy with a

single blow what long-term relations have laboriously built. The same vulnerability that makes it possible to achieve remarkable results with relatively modest resources in small environments, particularly those of the islands, should lead us to conclude that a reduction in these resources can entail significant harm to vulnerable aspects of their social and human development.

Thus, we welcome the ongoing study by the Committee on Economic Planning into the complex question of small island developing States' socio-economic and environmental vulnerability and sustainability.

In the interim, we urge our international partners to give greater thought to their options in channelling official development assistance to these countries. Ultimately, such assistance is quite small, yet fluctuations in it will have a great impact on our small island societies.

In closing, I wish to express my delegation's hope that this session will provide us with further impetus in our search for ways and means of implementing the Barbados Programme of Action so that the legitimate desire of the people of small island States for sustained and sustainable human development can be fulfilled.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde for his statement.

I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Mrs. Billie Miller, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Barbados.

Mrs. Miller (Barbados): On 25 April 1994 Barbados welcomed representatives of 111 Governments to Bridgetown for the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Conference was viewed by many as an important test case, with many small islands spearheading the effort to integrate the sustainable development imperative into national and regional policy options.

Like most experiments, the process created expectations among its target group that were not fully shared by the more influential members of the international community. The Declaration of Barbados and the Barbados Programme of Action were bold in their design, but modest in their scope for implementation — largely because of the prevailing differences in perceptions as to funding needs and priorities.

Five years later, this special session has been convened to review the progress made to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. It is a time to document the areas of real progress and to identify priority areas for further action. It is also, I submit, a time to reflect on the dynamic changes that have taken place in the conduct of international economic affairs since April 1994 and to examine their impact on the capacity of small island developing States to achieve their sustainable development objectives. I am convinced that without such an analysis, which would place our further efforts firmly within the context of the current and future global challenges, any follow-up strategies to strengthen the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action will be seriously flawed.

As the Deputy Prime Minister of Barbados, the country whose name is inextricably linked to the small island developing States process, I share in the responsibility to ensure that the commitments entered into by the international community in 1994 are carried to fruition in the most effective manner. I have a clear duty also to insist that the intellectual debate on how to strengthen the sustainable development prospects for a uniquely fragile and vulnerable group of countries is informed by the most current thinking, produced by those who fully understand the complex circumstances of the countries for which they prescribe solutions. These are not matters that can be trivialized simply because the communities whose concerns are being addressed are some of the smallest and most marginalized on the face of the earth. For, as the 1999 United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report* reminds us, if global opportunities are not shared better, the failed growth of the last decades will continue.

We recall that when our efforts began in the early 1990s there was little international recognition of the degree to which the ecological fragility and vulnerability of small island developing States constrained their development options. There was much scepticism, too, at the notion that there was a sufficient commonality among small island developing States to merit their categorization as a separate group of States deserving of special consideration within the United Nations system. Happily, international opinion has been persuaded of the merits of our case, and the acronym SIDS is now a permanent part of the lexicon of the United Nations.

It is important to highlight also the manner in which the small island developing States themselves have gone about the business of implementing those aspects of the

Barbados Programme of Action which fall under national or regional jurisdiction. Most small island developing States have now prepared national environmental strategies and action plans. The follow-up effort has been equally positive.

Across regions, the shared experience of the Global Conference has strengthened the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and created a forum for small island developing States issues. Information is now exchanged across vast distances through the technology of the Small Island Developing States Network. The lobbying power of a group of some 40 small States has had its most visible expression in the campaign for responsible international action to combat the phenomenon of climate change. Other issues critical to the survival of small island developing States lend themselves to similar treatment. In summary, Barbados is proud of the pioneering work that has been done by AOSIS and is confident that its central role as an advocate for the interests of small island developing States and as a focal point for cooperation between small island developing States will be strengthened in the future.

Internationally, while the call to action in support of small island developing States has generated some positive results, the overall response has not been encouraging. Indeed, the small island developing States donors meeting held in February of this year, while generating an enthusiastic response from small island developing States and gaining the attention of donor countries, has thus far failed to produce tangible results or additional project funding.

The Caribbean islands, together with their continental partners of the Caribbean Basin, accord the highest priority to the sustainable management and use of their most important shared economic resource. I speak of the Caribbean Sea. We have recognized that the Caribbean Sea can no longer sustain the immensity of demands placed upon it without a holistic and integrated management approach. For this reason the Caribbean Basin States have proposed to the international community the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. This is a new concept that is still in its infancy and will be the subject of further careful elaboration. It remains our firm contention that the special characteristics of the Caribbean Sea merit an innovative management approach embracing the concerns of all States bordering the Sea, as well as the international community.

Barbados is grateful for the cooperation and partnership shown by the members of AOSIS, the Group of 77 and China and Mexico under the leadership of Canada in the recent efforts to elaborate a draft resolution to take forward this concept. We are confident that we can count on their support when discussions on the matter continue in the Second Committee during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

As we look to the future, the debate on ways to enhance the sustainability of small island developing States must necessarily be informed by one central new factor: the impact of globalization and trade liberalization on the economic prospects of our countries. In April 1994, the Uruguay Round had not yet concluded. The World Trade Organization had not yet come into being. More significantly, the majority of small island developing States — with limited capacity for strategic analysis and negotiation — had failed to grasp the enormity of the process upon which the major trading nations of the world were embarked. It is now clear, in 1999, that with the erosion of trade preferences and the decline in aid flows, the sustainable development imperatives of small island developing States are seriously constrained by the magnitude of the economic adjustments we are now compelled to make. The banana battles of recent vintage have been a cruel reality check for the countries of the Caribbean.

The small island developing States process has done much to expand the concepts of vulnerability articulated earlier by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Much promising work has been done to develop a vulnerability index to balance the distortions created by excessive reliance on gross national product per capita. This could provide an important additional element in considering a country's graduation from concessionary financing if international development institutions could be persuaded to accept it and apply it consistently.

Further attempts to create alternative approaches to lessen the vulnerability of small States during globalization are also being pursued under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force. For these to succeed, however, they must cease to regurgitate well-worn diagnoses and often inadequate policy responses and move to deal in a bold and innovative way with the profoundly different set of circumstances now facing the world's small States, three fifths of which are islands.

These small and vulnerable economies need longer and more flexible transitional arrangements to allow them

to make the inevitable adjustment to full trade liberalization. They need enlightened responses from the international community and policies that help strengthen their human and institutional capacity to deal with the changes ahead and to take full advantage of the new technologies of the knowledge-based economy. They need support for their attempts to diversify into new areas, such as services, not arbitrary reactions that seek to attribute any perceived competitiveness to practices dubiously described as harmful. Finally, they need protection against the insidious spread of transnational crime in the form of narcotics and arms trafficking and money laundering, to which geography, size and insularity make them especially vulnerable.

Sustainable development for small island developing States in the twenty-first century will require an unambiguous commitment from the international community to develop special measures to assist small island developing States to make an effective transition to globalization and to guard against their further marginalization. We look forward to building that partnership.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Betty Okwir, Cabinet Minister, Office of the Vice-President of Uganda.

Ms. Okwir (Uganda): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the President most warmly on his election to preside over our deliberations. We have complete trust and confidence that he will lead us to a fruitful conclusion.

In Barbados in 1994, we recognized the special heritage of mankind that small island developing States represent. We noted with particular fondness the grace, delicate balance and richness of the harmonious coexistence of diverse forms of flora, fauna and humanity that make the islands unique and the apple of the world's eye. Yet at the same time we stated candidly that the islands were increasingly vulnerable and that their precarious situation, if left unattended, would soon mirror similar critical circumstances in Africa, the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. Today, as we review the Barbados Programme of Action, we would like the small island developing States to be recognized as a category of countries whose vulnerability deserves special attention, and to express our full solidarity with them. It is our hope that such recognition will help in the urgent mobilization of support for the efforts of small islands to develop sustainably.

The sustainable development of small islands, and even their survival, should not be taken for granted. How the islands fare in this fierce world of cut-throat competition and an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor — their very survival in a world in which unsustainable production and consumption patterns threaten the global ecological balance — may well mirror the fate of mankind. It is for this reason that we want to condemn in particular the continued dumping of hazardous and radioactive wastes and materials into the Caribbean Sea and similar environments. Clear-headed and far-sighted calculations should therefore solidify our determination to summon the political will to fight alongside small islands in their quest for survival and sustainable development.

We have carefully studied the draft final document of this special session of the General Assembly. We agree with and fully support the central priorities that have been identified in the areas of climate change, natural and environmental disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources, energy and tourism. We also applaud the careful thought that was given to designing the means of implementation, covering such diverse areas as sustainable development strategies, capacity-building, resource mobilization and finance, globalization and trade liberalization, transfer of environmentally sound technology, a vulnerability index and international cooperation, among others. We affirm in particular that the small islands deserve and must be accorded special consideration on account of their debilitating economic vulnerability as a result of size and environmental fragility as well as natural disasters.

Secondly, we believe that small island developing States deserve and must be accorded special treatment under existing multilateral trade arrangements.

Thirdly, we fully support the call by the small islands to be considered favourably for access to concessional resources towards the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We should recommit ourselves to supporting the efforts of small island developing States to develop sustainably and to survive as an invaluable heritage.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the convening of the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados in 1994 following the recognition of their special status in Rio in 1992 and the adoption of a

concrete plan of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States was a wise and forward-looking decision by the international community. We must recommit ourselves to its continuous and full implementation. This is the least that we can do in support of peoples and cultures to which nature seems to give so generously with one hand while threatening with the other to obliterate them, with the connivance of some irresponsible producers, consumers and polluters.

We wish this review session resounding success.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Eduard Kukan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia.

Mr. Kukan (Slovakia): Due to time constraints, I will limit myself to the main parts of my statement. The full text is available to all delegations.

I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the four Central European countries — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia — which form the so-called Visograd group, a forum established in 1991 to promote regional policy coordination and cooperation in the area of foreign affairs, environment, education, culture, science and technology, infrastructure and transboundary issues.

On behalf of the countries of the Visograd group, I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations family. We are of the view that the recent admission of the three new Members to the United Nations, all of them small island developing States, came at the right time to allow them full participation in this special session.

The Visograd group countries support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in all of its 14 priority areas. We believe that the Barbados Programme of Action, which calls for actions to be implemented at the national, regional and international levels, provides for an integrated and comprehensive basis for the sustainable development of small island developing States.

We have come to this special session to review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The countries of the Visograd group are ready to contribute to the success of the special session, which should not be a mere repetition of what we already agreed in Barbados five years ago but a forward-looking and action-oriented exercise — a true follow-up.

In this global world, we all have to bear global responsibility. One of the elements of this global responsibility is to recognize the special vulnerability of small island developing States, in particular in the economic and environmental areas. The Visograd countries, as it was also stressed at the meeting of Prime Ministers and the meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Visograd group countries in Slovakia in May this year, support a coherent and integrated approach to sustainable development, in which economic, environment, development and social policy issues cannot be isolated one from the other.

In 1994, when the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted, the process of globalization was not as evident as it is today. We are aware of the present problems of small island developing States in adapting to globalization and trade liberalization. We fully recognize the urgent need to facilitate the integration of small island developing States into the world economy, because only then will those States be able to benefit from the ongoing process of globalization and trade liberalization.

The four Visograd countries, as emerging donor countries, have a growing capacity to contribute to technical assistance and to science and technology development to participate in mutual trade and exchange of goods and even to provide for investment capital flows to small island developing States. The mutual trade between the Visograd countries and the small island developing States has been growing significantly in recent years, and we firmly believe that this trend will continue in future. There is a potential to increase mutual trade on both sides, in particular on the basis of the identification of investment opportunities in the small island developing States.

Moreover, the small island developing States have become a popular tourist destination for nationals of the Visograd group countries. The number of tourists flowing to the small island developing States from our region has been steadily growing in recent years. While we recognize the economic benefits of tourism for the small island developing States, we share their concern for its sustainability and ecological dimension. In this context, we welcome the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its seventh session, on sustainable tourism, and we support its application, as appropriate, to small island developing States.

One of the most important tasks of the international community in assisting the small island developing States is to successfully combat global warming. Only a genuine effort by all countries will be able to bring about long-lasting effects. I am proud to say that the countries on behalf of which I am speaking today have all fulfilled their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to stabilize emissions of greenhouse gases at base-year level. We have even achieved significant reductions in emissions. Unfortunately, we all know that the commitments undertaken in the Convention were not sufficient to meet its ultimate objective, which is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

That is why our countries, although aware of the economic and social costs involved, are working with determination, together with the small island developing States, on the elaboration of the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention. All the Visograd group countries have already signed the Kyoto Protocol. I wish to state very clearly at this forum that the countries of the Visograd group are committed to implementing their greenhouse gas reduction targets. However, we are concerned about the slow progress being made in elaborating the rules in some key areas, which the Protocol does not formulate in detail. The Polish Minister of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry, Mr. Jan Szyszko, as President-designate of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, is committed to making considerable step forward in building up consensus on pending issues. Without significant progress in negotiations in Bonn this autumn, the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol will be imperilled. Climate safety is a vital issue for the sustainable development of small island developing States. Therefore, the implementation of the provisions of the Protocol by all parties is essential for the future of small island States.

Small island developing States have a limited capacity to respond to and recover from natural and environmental disasters, which they face year after year. This is one of the main areas of concern for the international community. We fully adhere to the commitment to assist small island developing States in establishing and strengthening national and regional institutional mechanisms and policies designed to reduce the impact of natural disasters, to improve disaster preparedness and to integrate natural disaster considerations into development planning. We also believe that the utmost attention should be given to an early-warning mechanism as one of the crucial elements in the field of disaster preparedness.

In May 1998, the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, with the participation of more than 2,000 delegates from all parts of the world. As emphasized in chapter IX of the Barbados Programme of Action, the biological diversity of small island developing States is due to the small size, isolation and fragility of island ecosystems, which are among the most threatened in the world.

My statement, which is being made on behalf of the Visograd group countries, is evidence of growing regional and international cooperation and solidarity. By the same token, I cannot fail to say how impressed we all are by the prevailing spirit of solidarity among 42 small island developing States which have found a common language, although they are located in different corners of our planet. This is the kind of solidarity which we can all learn from. Now it is up to the rest of the international community to show its will and interest in helping the small islands overcome big problems. This Assembly provides the right opportunity to do so.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Hilda Kari, Minister of Forestry, Environment and Conservation of Solomon Islands.

Ms. Kari (Solomon Islands): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Solomon Islands, I wish to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Gurirab on his election as President of the General Assembly at its twenty-second special session to review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. I am confident that under his able leadership, this session will chart the future course of the successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. I am also grateful to the Commission on Sustainable Development for serving as the preparatory body for this special session during its seventh session under the skilful chairmanship of New Zealand's Minister for the Environment.

Solomon Islands supports the statement made this morning by the Prime Minister of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. I wish, however, to reiterate some of the issues raised so far as they relate to

my country's efforts and priorities in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The Barbados Programme of Action is a product of the Rio process. It is therefore bound to the principles and ideals of Agenda 21. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 outlines the special problems of small island developing States, noting a combination of factors giving rise to their vulnerability: small size, ecological fragility, isolation from markets, geographic dispersion and limited resources. The Convention on climate change, the Biodiversity Convention and the United Nations Agenda for Development have also acknowledged the unique situation of small island developing States and their need for international support. While the economic and ecological vulnerabilities of small island developing States are shared by many developing countries, they affect small island developing States in ways that magnify the risks and therefore demand greater and more urgent action. In this regard, efforts to produce a composite vulnerability index must continue to be supported. Such an index would assist in determining the level of international support that small island developing States would require in order to cope with the formidable challenges of sustainable development.

Despite the increasing global recognition and significance attached to the sustainable development of small island developing States, international action towards the execution of the Barbados Programme of Action in the past five years has been unsatisfactory. While the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Programme of Action lies first and foremost with small island developing States, assistance from the international community is imperative, a fact that we will continue to repeat.

Solomon Islands has taken, and will continue to take, measures to carry out the Programme of Action. Our national environmental management strategy, produced in 1993, is our blueprint for the management of our environment. This national environmental management strategy is a manifestation of my country's recognition of the importance of our environment and its resources for the health, welfare and development of our communities.

It incorporates various sectors identified in Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, including biodiversity and coastal, marine and land resources. The Department of Forests, Environment and Conservation is the focal point for the implementation of our environment-management strategy, and it coordinates the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Furthermore, my Government has enacted national legislation on wildlife protection and management, the environment, forestry and fisheries. A sustainable tuna-management plan has been completed under our new Fisheries Act and, thanks to the Australian Government, our forestry-management plan is also in position. Our medium-term development strategy for 1999-2001, while promoting sound economic growth and ensuring the provision of adequate social services, also attempts to address some of the environmental concerns of the Programme of Action. Moreover, Solomon Islands has acceded to or ratified a number of environment treaties, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Conventions on biodiversity and on desertification.

Regional cooperation is a vital mechanism for action under the Programme. Implementation of the Programme of Action has had some success in our region. Solomon Islands is participating in a number of regional programmes such as the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme, the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, the South Pacific International Waters Strategic Action Programme and the South Pacific Economic Action Plan. There is a need to ensure greater collaboration among and between small island developing States of different regions through the development of common approaches to address common problems, and through the exchange of experiences and information. In this regard, the role of the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) is vital; there should be continuing support for the Network's efforts.

The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action needs to go beyond the adoption of national policies and legislation. However, inadequate financial resources and lack of capacity remain major obstacles to the wider and timely implementation of our programmes and projects. These constraints are being compounded by the overall decline in official development assistance flows, falls in commodity prices, limited market access, heavy debt burdens and the increasing economic threats associated with globalization and trade liberalization. Most small island developing States, including Solomon Islands, rely heavily on official development assistance for our development endeavours. Resource mobilization is therefore one of the main challenges for the international community.

While our concern with resource constraints is by no means new, all partners and stakeholders must address it with new resolve if this special session is to provide the required impetus to carry out the Programme of Action. Adequate, predictable and new and additional financial

resources, as called for in chapter 33 of Agenda 21, are essential for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. Equally important are capacity-building through education and training, awareness-raising, institutional strengthening and coordination, and availability of and access to appropriate environmentally sound technologies.

The meeting of small island developing States and of donors held in February 1999 needs appropriate follow-up action. The project proposals that were presented during that meeting are based on original national strategies and plans for the implementation of the Programme of Action. My Government has been working to fine-tune our project proposals; we are prepared to undertake further consultations with interested donors and other funding entities.

Finally, the role of the United Nations system in creating an enabling international environment is critical. We need the United Nations to confront the risks posed by globalization and to harness its opportunities. The activities of United Nations agencies in small island developing States should also be consistent with the national and regional priorities to ensure the effective utilization of resources and the coordinated implementation of the Programme of Action. Among other priority sectors and issues for Solomon Islands are the following: conservation of the biodiversity of its territory, coastal and marine resources, land resources and agriculture and energy resources. Measures of adaptation to cope with climate change and sea-level rise are fundamental, along with effective strategies for natural disaster preparedness and mitigation. The successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in the future requires renewed commitments and effective partnerships at all levels. Coordination of activities, including donor initiatives, is essential. New and additional resources are critical to making the difference. Capacity-building is a key priority across all areas of the Barbados Programme of Action.

I hope that the outcome of this special session will provide a sound basis for further action by all partners and stakeholders. Solomon Islands is committed to doing its part. We invite others to join in our collective efforts to make sustainable development an achievable goal for our island communities in the new millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call next on Mrs. Maria Minna, Minister for International Cooperation of Canada.

Mrs. Minna (Canada) (*spoke in French*): As Canada's recently appointed Minister for International Cooperation, this is my first address to the United Nations, an organization that represents the world's hope for peace and development. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to participate in this special session of the General Assembly. As our past involvement with small island developing States bears out, the issues before the Assembly are of particular interest to Canada.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada supports and will continue to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Small island developing States have been a priority in Canada's official development assistance for more than 30 years. So far we have supported over 500 projects in coastal and small island developing States. In the process, we have acquired an understanding of the development challenges that face small countries surrounded by water. They also include such universal issues as poverty reduction and human-resource development, as well as meeting the challenges of globalization and taking advantage of its opportunities.

Of course, Canada has a good foundation, one on which we intend to continue building. In 1997, for instance, we extended our involvement in South Pacific ocean management, in cooperation with the South Pacific Forum. The seven-year Canada-South-Pacific Ocean Development Programme continues its work in ocean management, institution-building and marine environmental protection. Last March, we initiated the implementation of an environment capacity project with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), which also focuses on coastal and marine resource management, capacity-building and strengthening communications in the OECS region.

Our experience confirms an important premise on which the Barbados Programme of Action is based, namely that some of the most urgent issues that small island developing States face are related to the seas that surround them. We understand the special requirement for small island developing States to work closely with their neighbours. They need to pool individual resources and to pursue common interests. They also need to fulfil overlapping responsibilities, such as the environmental protection of the seas they share and the building of regional institutional structures. In these cases, the regional approach is the only one that works.

Partnerships are the key to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and of the actions included in the document that we expect to come out of this special session. The partnership between small island developing States and the international community is critical in achieving sustainable development. Canada certainly encourages the development of partnerships between the various stakeholders, in particular non-governmental organizations, local communities and the private sector.

(*spoke in French*)

These universally shared interests have important implications for the planning of official development assistance strategies. First of all, the hard-won operational experience and expertise that Canada and its partners have gained in certain small island developing States are potentially useful for their counterparts in other parts of the world; I mention as an example our activities in the eastern Caribbean and South Pacific programmes I mentioned a moment ago.

More fundamentally, and this is particularly important, at a time when we should be making the most of limited resources, we must be aware that we have a vast and growing reservoir of experience. We must set about sharing more this important international resource.

(*spoke in English*)

This resource, this experience, can and should play an important part in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. It should be accessible wherever it is relevant, and we are thinking about what we can do to make it that way. The option we have been looking at would be to maximize the benefits generated through the Canadian International Development Agency's regional programme experience in small island developing States by improving the interregional transfer of the knowledge and experience they generate.

I have said that Canada recognizes the singular nature of the challenges that small island developing States face. I must add, in closing, that we are also aware of how important small island developing States are in the wider scheme of things, with respect to the world community, the world environment and the world economy.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Hiroshi Yamamura, Minister for Internal Affairs of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Yamamura (Marshall Islands): I bring Mr. Gurirab warm greetings and congratulations on his election to preside over this important special session of the General Assembly from President Imata Kabua of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The President was unable to be present here due to urgent Government matters.

It is a pleasure for me to personally welcome and congratulate the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission as full Members of the United Nations.

A comprehensive version of this statement is being circulated; I will summarize a few of its points.

My delegation fully endorses the statements made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and by the Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Our late president, Mr. Amata Kabua, returned from the Rio Conference full of enthusiasm and hope. At the Barbados Conference, the Marshall Islands delegation was optimistic that a new dawn of international dialogue with the small island developing States was about to ensue. The Barbados Conference laid down the fundamental principles of cooperation that our President had endorsed at Rio. The results of Barbados, the Declaration and the Programme of Action, are great documents that we have incorporated into our national deliberations.

It is my pleasure to announce the completion of the domestic preparations for the establishment of the national commission on sustainable development in order to ensure that all the chapters of the Barbados Programme of Action, as well as Agenda 21, are translated into tangible policies and concrete project proposals for the Marshall Islands. National priorities and assessments of progress will be established within the context of each chapter. We are also looking at how we can integrate the decisions and conclusions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as of major gatherings such as this one.

While the Marshall Islands is seeking to be proactive in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, overall progress will be achieved only through proactive actions by the international community as well. The decline in financial and technical support is quite alarming. What little has been received has been limited and has come mostly from our long-time friends. It is

clear that the Barbados Programme of Action has brought us little new in terms of financial support for sustainable development projects. We certainly have not seen what the Barbados Programme of Action describes as effective means, including adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources, in accordance with chapter 33 of Agenda 21.

We should reach a consensus on this aspect now. If we cannot, then the Barbados Programme of Action will be stood on its head. All small island developing States face the same problems, as recognized in the Barbados Programme of Action. Least developed as well as developing members of the Alliance should be given the appropriate assistance, bearing in mind their circumstances.

The Marshall Islands is a country on the front line of climate change. Our difficult situation is made more precarious for the future by the lack of progress in dealing with greenhouse gas emissions. We see little evidence that there will be a concrete, concerted effort by the countries primarily responsible for climate change — that the industrialized and rich countries will do anything serious until they themselves feel the effects of climate change. The tragic death and destruction resulting from the recent hurricanes are just a foretaste of what is to come.

The Marshall Islands hosted a workshop for the Alliance of Small Island States countries in Majuro in July of this year. We were able to welcome participants from all regions of the Alliance, as well as invited experts, through the generous support of our friends. My Government was asked to ensure the document adopted, the Majuro Statement on Climate Change, was brought to the attention of the international community, in particular at this special session. Consequently, with the assistance of the Secretary-General, we have been able to circulate this document for the special session.

In his opening statement to the workshop, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Mr. Imata Kabua, stated that the issue of climate change was not simply a small island developing State issue. Clearly, it is a responsibility for all humankind to deal with. The cooperative outcome that was achieved by the workshop was, in our view, a welcome contribution to this aim.

Allow me also to thank the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) and to say that we are constantly impressed at how much it has been able to do with such limited resources. It is discouraging, however, that SIDSNET continues to have to do more with fewer resources than other agencies in a similar position.

The Marshall Islands has tried to do more than what is required of us in our response to climate change concerns. Even though our emissions are so low that they do not show up on the scales used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we are trying to get them even lower. We are currently in the process of finalizing a sustainable energy development policy that will focus on solar energy, among other things. This will become part of our overall national sustainable development efforts, and we will have targeted outcomes such as the reduction of our emissions and moving the economy away from fossil fuels to the extent possible.

We hope that others, especially those countries most responsible for our current predicament, will take similar steps.

The international community should be more cognizant of the consequences of climate change, which at this stage present major threats to small island developing States and low-lying coastal areas. We are a pragmatic group of countries, and we are seeking to cooperate, not to confront. But as my delegation has stated before, it is our considered view that our firm position is not unreasonable. If faced with eminent destruction, most other countries would have taken up arms.

Furthermore, the United Nations system must become more responsive to our modest requirements and our well-reasoned project proposals. We have been receiving some assistance over the last few years from the United Nations Development Programme, and my Government has welcomed this. But these are first steps and must be complemented by further action.

In this regard, we welcome the announcement of the strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit as a positive step towards this goal. We thank the Government of Norway for its generous support and contributions.

Finally, poverty eradication must be an integral part of our new commitment to sustainable development. Collectively, we can do this now. We have described this effort as being more than giving men fish for one day; we must teach them how to fish so that they can live and prosper independently.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Erroll Glenn Snijders, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname.

Mr. Snijders (Suriname): Before the Rio Conference and the adoption of Agenda 21, successive Governments and the people of the Republic of Suriname, 90 per cent of which is covered by tropical rainforest, were able to recognize the need to pursue sustainable economic development, while at the same time safeguarding the environment. Thus they recognized their moral obligation to conserve the rainforest and a sound environment for future generations. The conservation measures that were applied were later on acknowledged in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the sustainable use of forests.

We are therefore proud of our impeccable record of dealing responsibly with the challenge of balancing the need for development and protection of the environment, as is evident in the many protected areas, covering various ecosystems, that exist in the country. Our protection measures cover wildlife, biodiversity, tropical rainforests and other ecosystems stretching from the coastal zones to deep into the interior of Suriname, encompassing more than 15 per cent of its territory.

Part of these protected areas is the recently created Central Suriname Nature Reserve, which covers 1.6 million hectares of pristine tropical rainforest. This Reserve will guarantee the preservation of one of the world most important ecosystems.

Following the adoption of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, the Government of Suriname acknowledged the necessity of strengthening its capacity for the sustainable management of its natural resources through, *inter alia*, the creation of appropriate institutional mechanisms to design and enforce sound environmental policies capable of countering the pressures and challenges arising from the promotion of economic development.

Through a presidential decree, the National Council for the Environment was created as an advisory body, with direct responsibility to the President of the Republic of Suriname, thus securing the involvement of the highest political authorities in an area of strategic concern to the nation. Furthermore, a National Institute for Environment and Development was established. It operates as an independent foundation to deal with operational activities, research and the enforcement of sound environmental policies.

In this respect, my Government would like to express its appreciation to the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Development Programme for their contributions to our capacity-building efforts.

We are aware of the fact that the successful achievement of sustainable development demands a continuing reassessment of our policies in order to avoid irreparable damage to our environment. The increase in mining and wood-processing activities during the last few years has compelled us to create additional mechanisms to strengthen our capacity to reconcile economic demands with the protection of the environment. In this regard, we have recently created the Foundation for Forestry Management and Supervision, which will enforce existing laws and introduce new laws and regulations in the forestry and wood-processing sector in order to guarantee the sustainable use of our tropical rainforest.

The Government's measures and the activities of the National Institute for Environment and Development have been undertaken in cooperation with national as well as international non-governmental organizations, such as Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund. These efforts have substantially increased public awareness of the fragility of our ecosystems and environment in the context of pursuing economic development. In implementing Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, we have come to understand more fully how our own activities — as well as those, such as global warming and climate change, that are beyond our scope of influence — can jeopardize our continued efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Because of our low-lying coastline and the fact that 90 per cent of our citizens, infrastructure and economic activities are concentrated on the coast, Suriname, like many small island developing States, would be particularly vulnerable to the rise in sea level that global warming could cause. It is also worth mentioning that a sea level rise would not only endanger our vast mangrove forest, which is known in the region and to the international scientific community as an important spawning and nursery ground for deep-sea fish, shrimp species and other important marine life; such a rise would also endanger the nesting grounds of various species of sea turtles that are already under pressure from fishing activities around the world.

In this context, the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action is an urgent necessity for our country; hence our firm commitment to keep our end of the bargain. We must express, however, our deep concern that, while at the national level the small island developing States have seriously demonstrated their resolve to implement the Barbados Programme of Action, as they agreed to do five years ago, the adequate and predictable financial resources that the international community pledged to provide to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action have not been fully provided. Moreover, during this time we have been confronted with an overall decline in concessional financial support to small island developing States, as well as by a substantial decline in official development assistance. The latter form of assistance is still a major source of development financing for small island developing States.

I would like to make an observation regarding two interrelated issues, namely, the desire of the wider Caribbean to declare the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development and the need to address the dangers related to the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive waste.

It is evident that the Caribbean Sea is of utmost importance, in particular for the small islands and other small developing States belonging to the Caribbean subregion. Hence, the protection of this semi-enclosed Sea is a matter of survival as should be recognized by the international community.

A first step in that direction is the acknowledgement of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. In this regard, it is appropriate that we seek ways also to address the issue of transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes through these waters. The continual disregard for the genuine concern of the Caribbean community about the dangers of these shipments, which threaten their very survival, is unacceptable.

We are pleased with the decisions to be adopted at the special session, which will take care of shortcomings in existing international legal regimes, in particular regarding disclosure, liability and compensation in case of accident. We hope that, on the eve of the new millennium, we can clearly demonstrate that international solidarity and multilateralism are not mere words, but have a deeper meaning reflecting the highest principles of humankind.

Finally, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the growing new phenomenon of piracy and illegal fishing in our territorial waters, which seriously hamper our efforts to benefit in a sustainable manner from our marine resources. We believe that other small island developing States are facing similar problems and therefore call for the design of a common strategy to halt these illegal practices and appeal to the international community, and the United Nations system in particular, to assist us in this endeavour.

In conclusion, my delegation would like, first of all, to call for the strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and to recognize the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) as an important tool in our capacity-building efforts. Secondly, I would like to make an appeal to the participants in the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States to enhance their support for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to mutually address the sustainable-development needs of our small islands and small developing States.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Timothy Harris, Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Housing of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The Government of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to commend Mr. Slade for his display of able leadership of the Alliance of Small Island States. I should also like to take the opportunity to officially welcome the Republic of Haiti to that body, mindful of its active involvement prior to the convening of this special session.

The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis has been consistently and loudly making the case for special consideration of the small island States, based on our vulnerability to a multiplicity of factors that can seriously impede our ability to sustain economic and social development. Our small size, fragile ecosystem, frequent exposure to natural disasters and migration put our ability to sustain growth under constant extreme stress. Limited domestic markets, limited opportunities for economies of scale, high dependency on a limited range of agricultural products and tourism leave Saint Kitts and Nevis at the mercy of the fluctuating fortunes of an international marketplace. These are some of the factors that impact the viability of small island States.

One should fully recognize that the Barbados Programme of Action addresses the development problems that are commonly faced by small island developing States. The Barbados Programme of Action focuses on those common environmental factors that influence and hinder social and economic progress. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, we have been addressing the Barbados Programme of Action in the following eight areas: climate change and sea-level rise; natural disasters; management of waste; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; tourism; and biodiversity resources. We have made commendable progress in each of these areas.

For small island developing States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis, the progress made so far has been the result of several components, one of which has been the contributions and assistance of donor agencies and countries. I would like therefore to place on public record our sincere appreciation and thanks to those donor agencies and countries and to express our wish for their continued support. This support is necessary if countries such as ours are to continue to work towards the realization of the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

Saint Kitts and Nevis supports the special draft resolution to declare the Caribbean Sea a special development area, especially in respect to the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes. We earnestly expect that the member States, the international community and the United Nations system will actively support efforts to develop and implement this concept and take action to avert the threat of pollution from ship-generated waste as well as the accidental release of hazardous and noxious substances.

Critical action is also required to address issues such as trade liberalization, crime and drug trafficking, poverty alleviation and unemployment. These threaten the national security and viability of small island developing States. Interestingly, we find today an environment in which the economic efforts of small island developing States and our efforts to alleviate poverty are being undermined by an unjust trading system and economic regulations. In the case of the Caribbean region, traditional export crops, such as bananas in the Windward Islands and sugar in St. Kitts and Barbados, are facing hard times. International trade and economic relations are significant factors militating against poverty-alleviation programmes and activities in our small countries. These are issues that must be addressed in tackling the needs of small island developing States.

We believe that the vulnerability index not only needs to be completed in a speedy manner, but will require the full recognition of the United Nations if it is to have meaningful value in addressing the development issues facing small island developing States. It must be recognized that the Barbados Programme of Action is heavily slanted towards environmental management. This is understandable, given the fact that it is a close successor to the Rio Conference of 1992. It does not provide for action on certain kinds of social issues, including that of HIV/AIDS.

Clearly, there is therefore a need to develop instruments that encourage the type of relationship that small island States want. There is also the critical need for international agencies to meet obligations agreed to even before the 1994 Barbados Conference, and we refer specifically to the commitments under Rio. Of course, there is need to put on the table a proposal to conduct a full review of the Barbados Programme of Action in or about the year 2004.

There are numerous projects which require the critical support of the donor community in order to ensure their effective realization. The successful implementation of these projects would indeed redound to the benefit of our people and would translate into increased opportunity for all of our citizens.

In conclusion, I wish to stress our commitment to the principles set out in the Barbados Programme of Action to ensure the continued sustainable social and economic growth of small island States. However, I must again emphasize the inherent constraints in our capabilities and capacities, given the restraining factors I mentioned before. Therefore, we seek the continued support and assistance of donor agencies and countries in furthering the cause of small island developing States in bringing about greater equity in development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Santiago Nsobeya Efuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Nsobeya Efuman (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to cordially and respectfully greet all the representatives of the Member States of the United Nations and the other members of the international community, as this is the first time I have addressed the General Assembly since my recent appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

I would like to recall that in his statement before the plenary General Assembly at the fifty-fourth session, on 23 September, the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea had the opportunity to fully describe the well-known characteristics of the international situation at the threshold of the third millennium. He also described my country's vision of the future in the light of the architecture of the current international system, and he formulated some concrete proposals to further the search for solutions to the many grave problems facing humanity, now and in the future, particularly the dilemma of the developing countries.

We congratulate the President of the General Assembly once again on his election and express our satisfaction that the work of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, is under his skilful and able guidance.

My delegation welcomes the important work of the Secretary-General and the ever-growing awareness of the United Nations that if our countries are truly to share the immense benefits of the advances in science and technology during this century, international cooperation and solidarity for the overall development of our States must have new, fairer and more equitable methods of cooperation and assistance.

My country considers that this special session, because of its rich diversity, can, among other important things, synthesize a collective, thoughtful and sincere response to the question of whether, since the Rio Conference in 1992, the unanimous recognition by the international community of the complex and precarious situation of island developing States — be they large, medium-sized or small — has led to the support, solidarity and assistance required to supplement their own national efforts in order to enable them to address the enormous difficulties they face in achieving sustainable development, particularly in the most vulnerable sectors and those of highest priority.

If, despite the efforts made in various areas to attain this objective, the answer is still negative or ambivalent, as could certainly be inferred from the assessment that has brought us together here, we believe the second question before us is whether we — the United Nations, our partners, international donors, regional and subregional organizations and each State individually — should do now, if we do not want to succumb to the quickening, inexorable trend towards internationalization and globalization with their political and economic challenges for our countries.

In the final analysis, we need to establish concrete and effective measures to guarantee the maintenance of peace, security and stability in our countries as prerequisites for sustainable development. We cannot remain for ever at the mercy of and under the threat of destabilization and organized crime. We want to eradicate poverty, which seriously obstructs our efforts to consolidate democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and State governance. We want to provide basic social services — education, nutrition, sanitation, communications, transportation and information — to the people of our country, whose territory is divided between the mainland and the islands.

In order to face the spectre or the reality of marginalization, we need a response to the question of whether our States' economies will be able to be competitive within the rules of a globalized world and the question of the responsibility of international organizations and regional groups to facilitate our integration into such an economy. We also need a fair mechanism from the international community to lend aid and assistance to the island developing States in cases of natural disasters.

Someone will rightly ask "Why, if there are already mechanisms and strategies to cope with these challenges?" This is the very problem, because it is paradoxical that given so many great ideas, mechanisms and strategies, the problems persist and situations constantly become worse. Something must be happening when a normal and healthy individual to have difficulty walking.

It is important to recognize the commendable efforts, actions and programmes carried out resolutely by the organizations of the United Nations system, by regional institutions and by each State to make a contribution to and ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Seychelles Mahe Declaration.

For its part, Equatorial Guinea has embarked on a vast programme of action and national strategies that involve the entire civilian population, particularly women

and youth, to attain the objectives of sustainable development. What is needed is more resolute solidarity and support from the United Nations and the international community.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Among these efforts we would like to mention the national economic conference, held in Bata in 1997, which had as its objectives the involvement of all segments of society in defining the priorities for national development in all sectors, the designing of strategies for such development in the short, medium and long term and the rational use of oil resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable sectors and to promote productivity for the sake of the harmonious development for our country.

Furthermore, my country also makes its modest contribution to the attainment of subregional integration in Central Africa, together with the member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States and of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming the importance my country attaches to the success of this special session and by invoking from this lofty rostrum of the United Nations the legitimate right of our States to development and survival.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly has been convened at a time when the world is witnessing a number of political, economic and scientific changes that have provided many opportunities for advancement, as well as economic and social development, while also bringing with them enormous challenges for a number of States, including island developing States.

In this respect, I would like to express my delegation's full support for the statement made earlier today by the President of the Republic of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The era of globalization, trade liberalization, the securing of resources necessary for sustainable development, the development of human resources and the preservation of the environment have imposed specific conditions that small island developing States are required to fulfil in order to integrate themselves into the world economy. This same era has imposed challenges whose effect is exacerbated by the small size of markets and the structural constraints that limit the capacity of these island States for diversification, expansion of their economic base and enhancement of their competitiveness. Furthermore, many of these countries continue to suffer from economic recession brought about by a number of factors, including the sharp decline in the prices of raw materials and basic commodities, debt accumulation and the decline in official development assistance.

The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, was aware of the enormous challenges facing these States when it adopted the Programme of Action, now considered the starting point for the sustainable development of small island developing States, whose ability to protect themselves against natural disasters is indeed limited. Their resources are also insufficient to prevent environmental changes, such as the depletion of the ozone layer, global climate change, the greenhouse effect, rising sea levels, increasing water salinity and the scarcity of natural resources, such as water and minerals. All these challenges oblige the international community to assist these States, both materially and technically, so that they may be able to adapt to the era of trade liberalization and technological advancement, to participate in and integrate into the world economy and to comply with the World Trade Organization's conventions.

Relevant General Assembly resolutions charge the international community with a special responsibility vis-à-vis the small island developing States, which suffer from a scarcity of natural resources or depend primarily on depletable resources, with a view to enabling them to diversify the sources of their income and to overcome the problems they face.

The small island developing States, which take a keen interest in the success of the Barbados Programme of Action and the plans of action for sustainable development in their respective countries, confirm the need today for a review of the implementation of the international commitments made by the donor countries, by organizations of the United Nations system and by regional and international organizations to finance developing island States' sustainable development plans and projects. Such a review would consider the plans and projects that are being implemented or that will be

implemented during the period 1999-2003, through bilateral or multilateral assistance.

We are confident that if the Barbados Programme of Action were implemented effectively by donor States and organizations, it would be a practical reflection of the principles of interdependence, solidarity and cooperation within the international community. It would also be an important factor in alleviating the difficulties and impediments faced by many small island developing States, thus sparing them the burden of resorting to borrowing from international funds. In this respect, we hope that these States will strengthen and promote means and opportunities for cooperation among themselves through the exchange of information, expertise and experience.

The State of Bahrain is aware of the problems that beset the small island developing States; therefore, it has drawn up and implemented appropriate plans to address those problems, particularly the problem of the gradual depletion of natural resources and the scarcity of water resources. These plans include a national programme for the gradual phasing out of ozone-depleting substances, desalination projects, recycling of treated sewage and conservation of natural resources. Our development projects have led to the diversification of economic activity, to the proper management of natural resources and to the development of human resources by broadening the industrial base, creating a climate conducive to foreign investment and banking activity and upgrading the quality of public services and infrastructure; they also promote joint economic projects and the transfer of technology and provide opportunities for the private sector to play its full role as a central pillar in the structure of the national economy, with a view to enhancing economic and social development.

Basic infrastructure and the social, economic and training sectors in Bahrain account for over 70 per cent of the gross public expenditure and aim at spreading the benefits of development across the board. These efforts have in the last five years helped the State of Bahrain achieve an advanced position in the human development index, as stated in the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report*.

While taking pride in our national economic and social efforts, we should like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the assistance received from our brotherly Arab States, from friendly countries, from United Nations agencies and other international organizations and in particular from the United Nations Development Programme.

Bahrain has formed various national committees encompassing governmental and non-governmental institutions for the preparation and implementation of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action. These fall within the framework of preparing a comprehensive national strategy for the enhancement of the national economy and the protection of the environment during the next millennium. They also take into account our national priorities in such fields as social development strategies for the twenty-first century, health and environment in the context of sustainable development, development of human resources in the field of meteorology, proper management of water resources, integrated environmental management against pollution caused by industrial activity, protection of the atmosphere and the enhancement of the capacity of the State's environmental research centre.

The State of Bahrain has put forward plans for two important projects in the field of biological diversity and integrated environmental management, with a view to obtaining financial and technical support through the Ministerial Conference of the small island developing States of the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, held in Malta in November 1998. The two plans were also submitted to the donors' conference for small island developing States held at United Nations Headquarters last February.

We hope that these projects will gain the support of the donor countries and the relevant international organizations, in particular the Global Environment Facility.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we look to the future with great hope and confidence that the international community will support the issues facing the small island developing States, namely, the challenges of balanced development and integration into the world economy, in view of the fact that such States are an integral part of the international community.

In the final analysis, the international community is duty-bound to work towards the accomplishment of the aspirations of the United Nations in reaching equitable solutions to the economic and social problems of all Member States and to achieve a dignified life for all humanity.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to recall that, in accordance with the decision taken this morning at this special session, each speaker's time is limited to five minutes. If this limit is not respected, as is often the case, we are likely to have extended meetings. On the other hand, if we respect the time limit, we may even be able to avoid having an evening meeting and to hear all of the speakers on today's list during this meeting.

I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Uschi Eid, Deputy Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.

Ms. Eid (Germany): During the last few months we have experienced very intensive, constructive and forward-looking discussions on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. I want to express our appreciation to Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda for leading the negotiations and to the Secretariat for its efficient support of this process.

Since Germany supported the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, we have welcomed the opportunity for an in-depth assessment of the implementation of those decisions and for underscoring the necessity to strengthen our joint efforts to secure a sustainable development path for small island developing States. This special session is proof of our continued commitment in this respect and also proof that the issues raised in the Barbados plan remain at the top of the political agenda.

I would like to endorse the statement made by the Minister of Finland, Mrs. Satu Hassi, on behalf of the European Union and underline some of the aspects of particular importance to the German Government.

In our view, the following lessons can be drawn from the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and should guide our future cooperation in this field.

First, sustainable development is a complex issue that requires intersectoral approaches and integrated planning at various levels. A great number of small island developing States are making great efforts to develop sustainable development strategies. I do not need to elaborate on that, as the Foreign Minister of Jamaica did so very eloquently this morning.

Secondly, the Barbados Programme of Action was right to emphasize the strengthening of institutional, technological and human capacities. These factors do indeed have a key role to play in terms of successful and sustainable development, and it goes without saying that human and institutional capacities are a prerequisite for addressing environmental, economic and social issues in the decision-making process simultaneously.

Thirdly, subregional or regional cooperation might bridge the gap for those countries which might not be in a position to avail themselves of all the necessary instruments to cope with emerging issues at the national level. Therefore, we will continue to support regional cooperation among small island developing States and with relevant institutions.

Fourthly, the review process underlined the importance of international trade as a prerequisite for sustainable development. This point has already been stressed by many speakers today. However, changes in the international trade regime could weaken terms of trade and lower national incomes. To fully exploit the opportunities of international trade in the medium term, further improvements in the provision of public goods, adjustment of domestic policies and strengthening of institutional and human capacities will be required. In this respect, development assistance can play an important role in helping enhance the capacity of small island developing States to maximize the benefits of the globalization process.

Germany is in favour of all endeavours that lead to better consideration of the special interests and needs of developing countries in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Therefore, Germany has provided up to 1 million deutsche marks to the WTO and DM 4 million to the International Trade Centre to support developing countries' capacities to participate on equal terms and play a stronger role in the forthcoming millennium round, held under the auspices of the WTO.

As a member State of the European Union, Germany will give full support to the efforts of the European Union during the next round of multilateral negotiations, under the auspices of the WTO, on international trade, as well as in the successor convention to Lomé. We would like to see a further reduction of the remaining trade barriers and small island developing States receiving even more secure access to export markets.

Fifthly, further consideration should be given by small island developing States to developing partnerships

with the private sector in order to increase the flow of much-needed private investment finance and technological transfer. Besides the agricultural sector, sustainable tourism and the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises offer further scope for the creation of employment and income opportunities, as well as the sustainable use of the rich natural resources of small island developing States.

Between 1994 and 1997, Germany made available to 33 small island developing States in all regions an amount of DM 233 million, through its bilateral financial and technical cooperation. For a number of reasons, Germany's cooperation with small island developing States will now mainly build upon existing programmes supported by the European Union, relevant regional organizations or multilateral funds such as the International Development Association. We are determined to support small island developing States in addressing all these issues to which I have referred and take this opportunity to renew our commitment to further implementing the Barbados Programme of Action. This requires especially sound and strong development-oriented domestic policies. We, for our part, should increase our efforts to facilitate better donor coordination, improve the quality of our aid programmes and seek innovative approaches by development, trade and finance institutions which are appropriate for coping with the special needs of small island developing States in the future.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Leiv Lunde, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Mr. Lunde (Norway): The Barbados Programme of Action was the first concrete follow-up to the 1992 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In the preparatory process for this special session, small island developing States have continued to demonstrate their willingness and ability to actively translate that Conference's decisions into concrete actions in the regional and national contexts. The state of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action clearly demonstrate, however, that much still remains to be done to promote sustainable development in these States. Further progress depends primarily upon national action in and by the countries themselves. However, international cooperation, both regional and global, is also required if these efforts are to succeed.

There is a need to foster an enabling environment conducive to sustainable development, to strengthen capacity-building and to build partnerships. We must continue to focus attention on measures in key areas, such as limiting the impacts of natural disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resource management, sustainable energy and tourism. The capabilities of small island developing States to reap the benefits and to reduce negative impacts of globalization require continued attention.

Small island developing States are practically non-contributors to climate-change gas emissions and sealevel rise. Yet they are likely to suffer the most as a result of climate change. This particular vulnerability underlines that it is urgent to deal effectively with climate change, but also that small island developing States' participation and contributions in the climate change negotiations are of crucial importance.

Our sustainable future is a common, global responsibility. International action means action by all partners. In the context of the follow-up to the Barbados Programme of Action, Norway has this year put into force a special action plan for small island developing States. The elements of the action plan have been developed in close cooperation with small island developing States, and we have found the close collaboration with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in this effort most rewarding.

This morning I signed, on behalf of Norway, an agreement with Under-Secretary-General Nitin Desai, on behalf of the United Nations, to finance a small island developing States advisory function for a period of three years in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It is my hope and belief that this initiative will assist the United Nations in providing timely and high-quality advice of key importance to small island developing States.

As an additional element of the Norwegian action plan, a joint Norway/AOSIS workshop was held in Lofoten, Norway, in August of this year to discuss areas for further progress and cooperation in the context of this special session. Representatives from small island developing States, regional organizations, bilateral donors, the United Nations and the World Bank participated. The report from the workshop is available at this meeting.

Norway also supports the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET), which we find to be an innovative use of information technology particularly suitable for small States with limited resources and geographically located over a very large area of the globe.

The measures I have mentioned are in addition to the continuing Norwegian contributions to multilateral institutions providing assistance to small island developing States. The measures have a strong emphasis on capacity-building and networking, tools that are key factors in improving sustainable development.

My Government also intends to continue its cooperation with small island developing States in the area of building partnerships to facilitate the financing and implementation of priority projects for sustainable development identified by small island developing States. The establishment of the small island developing States advisory function in the United Nations Secretariat is expected to be an important element in galvanizing international cooperation in this respect.

A number of sources must be used to ensure that the required resources become available. Domestic resource mobilization remains important. Official development assistance continues to be a valuable source for countries eligible for it. In addition, efforts should be made to build private/public and private/private partnerships both between small island developing States and with other countries. Enhancing access to international markets, promoting foreign investments and improving the flow of information on investment opportunities are also important measures to mobilize the resources needed. The Clean Development Mechanism, developed under the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, might be another tool for additional, innovative funding.

Multinational institutions have an important role to play. This special session must give strong and clear signals to the international financial institutions and United Nations organizations to provide appropriate assistance to small island developing States. Norway will maintain this view in our contacts with institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant forums.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the need for an integrated, cross-sectoral approach where environmental, economic and social concerns are addressed in a comprehensive manner. This special session means new opportunities to emphasize this aspect, as has been forcefully stressed by small island developing States themselves. Sustainable development is possible only if we succeed in making progress in all three of these arenas. We believe that the Barbados Programme of Action, updated and refined through this special session, provides an excellent basis for achieving this ambitious objective.

The Acting President: I now call on the Vice-Minister for International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, Mrs. Paulina García de Larrea.

Mrs. García de Larrea (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is with special pleasure that my delegation is speaking at this special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We do so as an expression of solidarity given the problems facing those countries as a result of their location and particular features.

While, on the one hand, these island States attract the world's interest because of the natural wealth that enables them to enjoy a high level of tourism development, on the other hand they are extremely vulnerable ecologically and economically. Their geographical location also makes them fragile in the face of the natural disasters that are common to their environment, including hurricanes, sea level changes and the recurrent phenomenon of El Niño, among others. These conditions common to small island States have prompted the international community to examine carefully island States' special needs for cooperation to strengthen the bases and structures of their sustainable development and to protect and preserve their natural ocean heritage, the management of which constitutes one of the world's greatest environmental problems.

Ecuador believes that the effects of globalization should be taken into account when considering cooperation for small island States so as to facilitate their adaptation to the new global structures that are being consolidated and to facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in 1994.

Ecuador would like to refer to the small island States located in the Caribbean, whose natural

environment of unique biodiversity is also very vulnerable to climate change and atmospheric phenomena, and presents limitations to their economic and social development. This is why we believe that the Caribbean and the countries located there should be integrated into the special programmes of sustainable development for small island States.

The serious effects of the El Niño phenomenon have had a cyclical impact on large parts of the earth. This impact has been greater on the countries of the eastern Pacific and the small island States. Ecuador has promoted the establishment in Guayaquil of an international centre for research into the El Niño phenomenon in order to expand scientific research into its naturally recurring changes, to achieve a better understanding of it and to be able to provide early warning as to its strength. This will help prevent and reduce its devastating effects by allowing for the development of timely national and international plans. We hope that this proposal will become a reality as soon as possible so as to provide support for national and international sustainable development policies and programmes, and that these will also benefit small island developing States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Wang Guangya, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, was an important follow-up action of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development. The Programme of Action adopted at the Global Conference provides guidelines for addressing the sustainable development issues faced by small island developing States.

Over the past five years, with the unremitting efforts of small island developing States and assistance from the international community, there has been some progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The efforts deployed by small island developing States in formulating national strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development, strengthening environmental legislation and improving the functions of environment-related departments are particularly praiseworthy.

Likewise, regional cooperation among small island developing States has achieved marked results. At the same time, however, we have also noticed a considerable gap between the progress made and the objectives set forth in the Programme of Action. The official development assistance provided by the developed to the developing countries continues to decrease. Trade and other concessions previously enjoyed by developing countries have been drastically reduced. Hurricanes and other natural disasters caused by global environmental degradation have caused severe damage to small island developing States and added to their economic and social burdens.

The Asian financial crisis has also had a strong adverse impact on the export, tourism and investment inflows of small island developing States. What is particularly noteworthy is that, with the accelerated pace of globalization and ever-fiercer international competition, small island developing States are encountering increasingly grave challenges as a result of serious constraints such as lack of financial, technological and human resources.

As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Barbados Global Conference, we must reaffirm the principles and spirit of the Programme of Action, take stock of existing obstacles and explore ways to resolve them, mobilize political will and reach action-oriented consensus.

It is true that the small island developing States will have to make their own efforts for development, but the vigorous support of the international community is indispensable given that economic globalization is creating unprecedented and fierce competition. The international community should pay closer attention to the small island developing States.

As for the next step in the implementation of the Programme of Action, I should like to stress the following points.

First, support from the international community should be intensified in the financial, technical and capacity-building areas so as to help the small island developing States overcome their difficulties. We are in favour of international organizations' accommodating the special needs of small island developing States in the allocation of posts and other aspects.

Secondly, the international community should encourage and support small island developing States in formulating their own strategies for sustainable development and in establishing priorities suited to their national conditions. They should take into full account the

characteristics and needs of small island developing States and help them achieve sustainable development.

Thirdly, the international community should assist the small island developing States in overcoming the challenges posed by economic globalization and help them explore and identify better ways to attract foreign investment and create more trade opportunities.

China is a developing country, and, like many small island States, faces the arduous task of developing its economy, protecting its environment and raising the living standards of its peoples. We full understand the difficulties of the small island developing States and sympathize with them. China has established friendly relations with many small island States and conducted fruitful cooperation with them, providing financial, technical and infrastructure construction assistance to the best of its ability.

China is willing to actively encourage enterprises to explore new fields and new approaches to economic and technical cooperation with small island developing States on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. China will, as always, support any reasonable requests by those States and wishes to further strengthen cooperation with them within the framework of South-South cooperation.

China stands ready to work with the international community and to make its proper contribution to the promotion of economic development and environmental protection of the small island developing States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Martin Andjaba, Chairman of the delegation of Namibia.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): It has been five years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and seven years since the affirmation of our collective commitment to safeguard Mother Earth through the implementation of Agenda 21.

However, if we analyse the overall balance sheet of the global environment, the situation remains precarious. The environmental problems confronting small island developing States are in fact a reflection of our global problems. Diminishing forests and biodiversity, declining fisheries, limited sources of freshwater, and fragile coastal and marine ecosystems are threatening the livelihood of the communities of small island developing States.

Due to the size of small island developing States, freshwater and coastal ecosystems are interconnected and, as a result, pollution discharges affect the coastal marine systems, which in turn threaten biodiversity. In addition, population growth puts pressure on water supplies in the small island developing States. It is against this background that the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action is so important to developing countries in general and small island developing States in particular.

The aftermath of the international financial crisis that affected South-East Asian countries and the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch, which swept through the Caribbean and Central American States and whose impact continues to be felt today, testifies to our common vulnerability to environmental catastrophes and therefore warrants greater solidarity among us all. Both events — the financial crisis and the natural disaster — demonstrated that in the contemporary global environment, small developing States are more vulnerable than others. It is therefore essential for the international community to provide assistance, both financial and in kind, to developing countries, in particular the small island developing States, so as to ensure proper training and information dissemination and thereby facilitate the implementation by States of their programmes to achieve sustainable development. Small island States are the custodians of our oceans and marine environment. If we are to meet our commitment to sustainable development, the international community should redress the decline in net disbursements of bilateral and multilateral aid from $2.36 billion in 1994 to $1.96 billion in 1997.

As we review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we should reflect the principle elements of Agenda 21 while at the same time outlining specific steps which need to be taken individually or collectively to assist small island developing States to develop innovative projects, including, *inter alia*, sustainable tourism, the long-term maintenance of clean water, air and land resources and human and institutional capacity-building. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Global Environment Facility, among others, in supporting the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

As one of the most arid States, Namibia understands the importance of the implementation of the Programme of Action. We share some characteristics of small island developing States, such as the fragility of our ecosystem,

vulnerability to climate change and economic vulnerability. We also welcome the 11 gauges set up in South Pacific States to monitor sea level rise and the strengthening of the tide gauge monitoring network for the Global Oceanic Observation System in the Caribbean, as well as the ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by almost all the small island States.

Namibia acknowledges the results of the donors' meeting on small island developing States, held from 24 to 26 February this year, in particular its emphasis on the commitment to and ownership of the Programme of Action on the part of the small island developing States, as elucidated through consideration of a compendium of national and regional project proposals. We also note with appreciation the efforts made by these States to meet their priorities and objectives in a manner consistent with the Programme of Action.

The Commission on Sustainable Development has continued to attract a growing number of Ministers every year. This confirms the commitment of the international community to address the problems facing all countries, especially developing countries. Let us use this special session to galvanize the necessary political will in order to generate momentum to eradicate poverty and enhance global prosperity in a sustainable manner.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Danilo Türk, Chairman of the delegation of Slovenia.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia associates itself with statement delivered earlier today by Mrs. Satu Hassi, Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, who spoke on behalf of the European Union and associated countries. I wish to make some additional points.

Slovenia is strongly committed to the implementation of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, the blueprint for global sustainable development adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. We are also intensely aware of the problems of the implementation of that blueprint and of the diversity of the tasks involved. The problems of small island developing States must be given the highest priority. This was clear even at the time of the Earth Summit. Convening the Barbados Conference was therefore natural and necessary. The environmental and economic fragility of the small island developing States has been generally recognized as a problem requiring the most urgent consideration. The United Nations should be satisfied with the momentum created at the level of political understanding and institutional improvement. This helped in creating the policy approaches intended to assist small island developing States. As the President of Micronesia remarked in his statement earlier today,

> "Although progress has been slow, we are beginning to see some benefits through such institutions as the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme." (*A/S-22/PV.1, p. 13*)

These and other instruments, including the Lomé Convention, represent the necessary basis from which further efforts must proceed. However, the special case of small island developing States requires much more than has been achieved thus far. More needs to be done in both of the basic areas of action: environmental protection and economic development. It is widely recognized that the critical environmental problems, especially global warming and sea level rise, affect most dramatically the small island developing States — precisely those States which are the least responsible for global climate change. The future of the ecological situation of the small island developing States is a truly global responsibility. Effective action is needed to stop and reverse the trends of global warming and to address other environmental challenges to the future of small island developing States.

The vulnerability of small island developing States also has an economic dimension. Changes in international commodity prices and in the general demand for goods affect them in a variety of ways. More often than not, these changes represent a direct cause of economic problems, poverty and social disintegration. Recognition of these problems, which we have heard repeatedly in the discussion today, must lead to specific action in the future. One area of action lies in the realm of methodology. The completion of the vulnerability index will help in assessing the effects and the needs of the most severely affected small island developing States.

Finally, and most fundamentally, these States clearly need special attention in international trade and in other spheres of international economic cooperation. While trade liberalization provides an opportunity for all States, small island developing States are clearly among those which need the assistance of the international community, including the United Nations, both in the effort to improve their competitiveness and, in those cases when

it is necessary, in the provision of special and preferential treatment in the multilateral trading system.

Since the Barbados Conference, five years ago, small island developing States have been continuously striving for the implementation of their commitments under the Programme of Action. This special session of the General Assembly should be able to make a real and meaningful contribution to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Let us ensure that such a contribution is made.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Nikolai V. Tchoulkov.

Mr. Tchoulkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the sustainable development of small island developing States. Owing to their circumstances, these countries are in a special and less favourable situation in terms of the availability of natural resources, energy, drinking water, land and other elements of development. The development problems of these countries are exacerbated by their distance from key markets, their vulnerability to the devastating impact of natural disasters and other economic perils.

At the same time, these States possess unique potential thanks to the wealth of experience they have gained, their cultural development, which includes a valuable heritage of tradition, and their access to the wide reaches of ocean, which contain a significant part of the world's biodiversity. For many small island States, the seas and oceans that surround them are a valuable part of the common heritage of mankind; therefore, solving their problems is the responsibility of the entire international community.

The 1994 Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was an important milestone in the international community's awareness of the specific difficulties facing small island States and of their special needs for sustainable development. It was a clear demonstration of international partnership and solidarity. The Programme of Action adopted at that Conference remains relevant to this day.

As a result of active efforts, principally by small island States themselves and also on the regional and international levels, some progress has been achieved over the past five years in implementing the provisions of the Barbados Programme of Action, especially in terms of integrating the environmental dimension into social and economic development strategies and policies. We welcome further efforts to that end, and we welcome the steps taken by international and regional organizations to implement the Programme of Action.

But these five years have also highlighted the significant difficulties faced by small island developing States in achieving their objectives. If these countries are to achieve sustainable development, a further and more effective effort must be made to assist them. There must be more active and consistent activities in support of their national efforts, along with measures for capacity-building, improving coordination and a focused strengthening of human potential.

Facilitating the transfer of environmentally sound technology, especially with respect to averting the negative effects of possible climate change; improving the capability to respond to natural disasters and to address problems of drinking water; the protection of coastal ecosystems; the development of new and renewable sources of energy; the sustainable management of tourism in a way that will preserve the environment and cultural authenticity and identity: all these are of critical importance.

In working towards those objectives, the problems of small island developing States cannot be viewed in isolation from global problems of environment and development. The successful solution of these problems can come about only with complementarity among the relevant efforts to achieve sustainable development. We welcome proposals for concrete initiatives aimed at promoting the sustainable development of small island developing States. We believe that approaches to this problem should be formulated within the framework of existing agreements and international legal instruments adopted by the competent multilateral institutions within the United Nations system. Unswerving compliance with the norms and principles of international law will guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of these efforts.

Given the broad similarity of the problems facing small island developing States, we must be careful to ensure that approaches to resolving those problems reflect the specific development needs and characteristics of each country. Hence, it is very important for the international community to identify individual criteria and accordingly to adjust its approach to addressing the problems of specific countries or groups of countries.

For its part, Russia remains ready to use its scientific and technological capabilities and its gains in the study of the world's oceans to provide practical assistance to the development efforts of small island developing States. In that context, we are encouraged by the model of tripartite cooperation under the auspices of the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions.

The United Nations system itself must continue to play the role of catalyst and stimulant in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action; it must make more effective use of existing resources and improve the coordinating machinery for focused, agreed implementation activities in priority areas for the achievement of the sustainable development of small island developing States.

We are confident in the usefulness of this special session. The productive and intensive work of the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as preparatory body for the special session has enabled us to formulate a balanced, realistic and forward-looking draft final document, which will be a new and important step towards the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and towards the full realization of the objectives of Agenda 21.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. André Adam, Chairman of the delegation of Belgium.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): In the context of the item before the Assembly at this special session, I wish to renew my delegation's congratulations to the three island States that have just joined the United Nations family: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. I wish also to convey my gratitude to Ambassador Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda for the stamina and high talent with which he guided the preparatory work for the special session of the General Assembly on small island developing States.

I fully associate myself with the statement made by Mrs. Satu Hassi, Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, as representative of the presidency of the European Union. Specifically, I endorse her comments on the role of the Lomé Convention, which has been the basis for the provision of appropriate support to many small island States.

For many of us, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, was our first contact with small island States and their special characteristics. It was at Rio that we learned that beautiful atolls were already under threat from a rise in sea level, and that the survival of entire communities was in jeopardy. At a very early stage, my country and its European partners recognized the key importance of this issue. That is why the small island States and the European Union acted as natural allies during the negotiations leading to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as its 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Belgium participated actively in the Rio Summit, as well as in efforts to implement the outcome. Indeed, at the national level, Belgium was one of the first countries to introduce eco-taxes that penalize pollutant emissions and promote investment in clean technologies.

As the first post-Rio conference, the summit in Bridgetown was rightly dedicated to small island States. It provided them with a common and recognized identity, as well as a framework for action to alleviate the specific constraints facing them. Five years later, this special session of the General Assembly demonstrates that the commitments of Barbados are still relevant. This session is the best way to convene the global community to take stock of actions taken and to consider possibilities for the future.

At this time of review and appraisal, let me note that the most crucial impact of the Barbados Conference has been an intangible but real one: the special concerns of small islands States have been recognized as such by the global community and have been tackled collectively as such by the members of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Indeed, the Barbados Conference and the various follow-up meetings generated a dynamic of solidarity and joint efforts that has allowed the small island developing States to work out together a common agenda that encompasses all the challenges facing them, well beyond environmental problems alone.

Concrete progress has also been achieved along the lines laid out in the Barbados Programme of Action, thanks to national and regional efforts and the assistance of the international community. To cite but a few examples, let me mention the innovative projects funded by the Global Environment Facility, the Global Oceanic Observation System, the progress in coastal and fisheries resource management, Internet connectivity in almost all the small island developing States and the establishment

of the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET). These examples give a far from complete picture of the considerable progress achieved. However, this should be no reason for complacency.

The most vulnerable among the small island developing States, the least developed countries, still lack the resources to carry out programmes promoting sustainable development on their own. Further assistance from the international community is required to help them face their specific constraints. In their case, the challenges of poverty eradication stand out clearly since they are linked to those of sustainable development.

The Belgian delegation fully recognizes the specific vulnerabilities of small island States. It understands that careful consideration of these vulnerabilities could, if necessary, be a useful component of criteria currently used for making decisions about cooperation. Belgium also considers that assistance should remain essentially focused on the needs of the most vulnerable States.

Apart from its contributions to the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme and the Lomé Convention among others, the Government of Belgium allocated $7.15 million bilaterally for various initiatives and projects in small island developing States in 1998.

On behalf of the Government of Belgium, I wish to reiterate my country's continued commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Barbados Conference as part of the international partnership that is essential not only for the small island developing States, but for all parts of our global village.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Yukio Satoh, Chairman of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): This special session is indeed an epoch-making occasion. We have gathered here for the first time to review comprehensively the implementation of the Programme of Action that we adopted five years ago in Barbados.

Japan welcomes this opportunity, and I assure the Assembly that my country will do its best in order to make this special session yet another step forward towards our common goal of sustainable development for small island developing States. As an island nation, Japan shares a broad range of interests and concerns with small island developing States. For a long time, we have been making painstaking efforts to strike a balance between the requirements of development and growth and the need to preserve our natural environment. That is why Japanese people appreciate the concerns and aspirations of small island developing States. I represent that appreciation here today. That is also why Japan is proud of having participated in the international efforts to render support to the sustainable development of these countries.

There is no doubt that it is essential for small island developing States to make their own efforts in the spirit of ownership in order to overcome the unique difficulties they face, difficulties which derive from their geographically disadvantaged positions. Yet it is also important for the international community to extend assistance to support these self-help endeavours of small island developing States. Recognizing this, Japan has been engaged in various forms of multilateral cooperation aimed at making progress in implementing the Programme of Action adopted at the Barbados Conference in 1994.

Japan has also been engaged in regional dialogues, such as the Japan-South Pacific Forum summit meeting of 1997 and the Japan-Caribbean Community annual consultation, which has been held since 1993. These dialogues have led to concrete projects, such as seminars of technical experts on the environment in Caribbean Community countries, the construction of the International Coral Reef Centre in Palau, which serves as a regional research and educational centre, and a survey mission for the construction of the environmental training and educational centre of the South Pacific regional environmental plan in Samoa.

Japan has also engaged in bilateral cooperation with many small island developing States. During the four years following the 1994 Barbados Conference, our bilateral assistance to these countries increased by 30 per cent. Japan is among the top contributors of assistance to these island States, providing one fifth of the total assistance by the Development Assistance Committee countries. Japan recognizes the continued importance of official development assistance to developing countries, particularly small island developing States. Japan is therefore determined to do its utmost to further strengthen and expand its official development assistance in the coming years, despite severe budgetary constraints stemming from Japan's own economic difficulties.

Japan advocates the international community's giving prior consideration to human security concerns as

we enter the next millennium. In this context, we recognize that one of the unique human security concerns small island developing States face is their vulnerability to climate change. Rising sea levels and the increasing frequency of storms and hurricanes are real threats to human security in each of these States. It is for the purpose of alleviating such human security concerns that Japan has extended financial cooperation to several small island States for the construction of sea walls to protect their shores against damage from high tides. Japan has also extended emergency assistance to Caribbean countries that have suffered from hurricanes. Certainly, the Kyoto Protocol is an important instrument for coping with global-warming issues, and Japan places top priority on its prompt and smooth implementation. We believe that only by creating a mechanism for clean development, as well as other highly reliable and feasible systems, can we take effective measures against global warming.

Before concluding, I would like to draw representatives' attention to the side event on the impact of natural disasters on small island developing States, which Japan is co-sponsoring with Papua New Guinea and which will be held tomorrow. The purpose of the event is to show the results of the analysis carried out by the Japanese marine science and technology centre on the generation and propagation of tsunamis, with a particular focus on the state of the seabed in tsunami-prone areas. We hope that this event will enlighten us all on how to minimize the damage from future natural disasters.

It is in our common interest to make further progress on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This special session will serve as a catalyst to draw more of the attention of the international community to the diverse issues facing small island developing States and to give new momentum to international cooperation to cope with these problems.

For our part, Japan is fully committed to our common goal of ensuring the sustainable development of small island developing States and is determined to make its best effort in the coming years in order to attain this goal.

The Acting President *(spoke in French):* I now give the floor to Mr. Alain Dejammet, Chairman of the French delegation.

Mr. Dejammet (France) *(spoke in French):* The preparations for this special session demonstrated the international community's dedication to the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action. We share the conviction of the small island developing States that this document, which highlighted their environmental fragility and economic vulnerability, is still fully relevant and still provides a suitable framework for these States' national sustainable development strategies.

Much progress has been made over the last five years, and France would like to praise the bold policies implemented by many small island developing States in order to overcome their structural handicaps. As regards the environment, the drafting of action plans and national strategies, the strengthening of institutional capacities and legislative strategies — all this deserves our praise as well.

However, the effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Actin has been hampered by the economic difficulties encountered by many of the small island developing States in recent years and sometimes by their lack of qualified personnel or the weakness of their administrative capacities. In this context, external assistance remains a vital resource for the vast majority of small island developing States. France, for its part, is determined to continue to support these States, as it has in the past.

France, in fact, remains the world's third largest aid donor, in 1998 providing nearly $6 billion in official development assistance — or 0.4 per cent of France's gross domestic product. In percentage terms, this is far and away the most substantial effort by any of the G-7 countries. This effort is directed first and foremost at the poorest countries, in particular the least developed countries. But in allocating assistance France also takes into account the vulnerability of countries.

Since the beginning of 1998 France has been reorganizing its development cooperation mechanisms. Under this reform, bilateral aid, which accounts for 75 per cent of the overall assistance, has been concentrated on a priority solidarity zone, which is defined and periodically updated by an inter-ministerial committee under the authority of the Prime Minister. The zone currently includes the following small island developing States: Vanuatu, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and all the African small island developing States — namely Cape Verde, the Comoros, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe and Seychelles. Small island developing States not included on this list can nevertheless receive support through certain specific instruments, such as the French fund for

the global environmental, the Caribbean fund and the Pacific fund.

This is why France is one of the leading donors to the small island developing States. In 1996, which is the latest year for which complete data is available fro the Secretariat, France allocated more than $110 million to the small island developing States. The main recipients were Haiti, Sao Tome and Principe, Vanuatu, Saint Lucia, Mauritius, Cape Verde and the Comoros. This aid is highly diversified, both geographically — since it is given to island States in three oceans — and as regards the nature of the projects, and it attempts to relate as closely as possible to the concerns of the island States themselves.

We are particularly interested in the problems of the small island developing States. Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Actio have called attention to how the island nature of these States renders them especially vulnerable. The geographic situation of France's overseas departments and territories in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific allows us not only to understand the handicaps and advantages of all of these small island developing States, but also to develop with them cooperative relationships in all sorts of fields, such as early warning and assistance in the event of catastrophes and technical assistance in training, education, health care and environmental management. In each of the three above-mentioned regions France isa member of the regional organizations that bring together the other States neighbouring its overseas departments and territories.

With regard to multilateral financing, which accounts for 25 per cent of our official development assistance, a large part of it is channelled through the European Union's aid programme. It is expected that for the period 1996-2000 more than a billion euros — or roughly the same amount in United States dollars — will be earmarked for the small island developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific area. I note that almost one quarter of this amount is to be funded by France, as part of its contribution to the European Development Fund.

Five years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action everyone agrees that a great deal remains to be done with respect to the sustainable development of the small island developing States. These States are confronted with major challenges, such as protecting the marine environment against various forms of pollution, the increasing scarcity of fresh water, ever more frequent and devastating natural disasters, adapting to climate change and to the rising sea level, integrating into the global economy, and the diversification of their exports.

France considers that the Barbados Programme of Action can be implemented only if everyone assumes his responsibilities. Island States must elaborate suitable national and regional sustainable development strategies and create domestic poiitical, economic, social, environmental and legal conditions that promote the implementation of these strategies. At the same time, these States must establish their priorities within this overall effort.

On the other hand, the donor countries must reverse the downward trend in development assistance. They must provide the small island developing States with the substantial resources they need to bolster their national capabilities. The donor countries must also improve their coordination with the other donors in order to maximize the impact of their assistance.

For its part, France is determined to reinforce its partnership with the small island developing States so as to provide them with bilateral and multilateral assistance that is both more effective and better geared to their requirements.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Isad Ayad Babaa, representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The convening of this special session to consider the sustainable development of the small island developing States represents the international community's recognition of the special vulnerability of these islands in the age of globalization.

The United Nations has warned the international community that the expected sea-level rise as a result of global warming will turn these small islands into paradises lost. There are more than 34 beautiful small island States scattered across the seas and oceans from the Caribbean to West Africa, from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, from the Gulf of Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea. All of these now face serious dangers posed by the severe economic and natural circumstances in which they find themselves. [illegible]as close and friendly ties with all these islands. My country, which is suffering from desertification and scarce water resources, fully understands the problems faced by these small islands and wholeheartedly sympathizes with them.

The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted five years ago at the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, gives genuine expression to the special interest of the entire world in these countries, as they are small and marginalized and face enormous obstacles in achieving their sustainable development. Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, recognized the unique character of the small island developing States and their special sustainable development needs.

The General Assembly has called on the Commission on Sustainable Development to review and implement the Barbados Programme of Action with a view to creating and promoting an international environment conducive to the mobilization of the financial resources necessary for supporting the efforts of those States to enhance their development capacities, put a halt to their environmental degradation, improve their economic situation and alleviate their poverty.

We recognize that the small island developing States bear the primary responsibility for their own sustainable development. In this regard, we welcome their efforts to honour their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. We also welcome the measures they have taken to achieve self-reliance and to promote cooperation among themselves. Nevertheless, the international community must honour its commitments undertaken in Rio and adopt all measures necessary to support the efforts of these countries in the field of sustainable development through an increased flow of bilateral and multilateral assistance. These islands must enjoy increased access for their exports to world markets; they must be integrated into the world economy; their access to technology must be facilitated; and their freshwater and human resources and tourism industry must be developed. The pollution that threatens their marine and natural resources, as a result of the dumping by some major Powers of their hazardous and toxic wastes into the oceans and high seas, must be eliminated. The small island developing States must be assisted in facing the grave dangers of environmental degradation and natural disasters.

If these islands are to succeed in achieving sustainable development, they will have to enjoy total peace and security. This in turn necessitates the elimination of the causes of tension and conflict in their regions and the eviction of foreign navies and bases that threaten their security, stability and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, my delegation pays tribute to the efforts of the United Nations, its development programmes, the Commission on Sustainable Development and other international organizations to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. My delegation reaffirms its view that this Programme will remain an effective framework in which the small island developing States may achieve sustainable development and economic growth. In his report on this question, the Secretary-General states that if we are able to alleviate the vulnerability of the small island developing States, we will be able to address the larger global problems.

More than ever before, the international community must exert greater efforts to find useful and practical solutions to the development problems of developing countries, foremost among which are those of the small island developing States, and help them to achieve their aspirations to sustainable development and growth. The international community must reaffirm its solidarity with the small island developing States and renew its resolve to establish a new, committed and strong partnership between them and the rest of the world so they can successfully face the challenges of globalization and natural disasters in the new millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hassan Adamu, Minister for Environment of Nigeria.

Mr. Adamu (Nigeria): I convey to Mr. Gurirab the warmest congratulations of the President and the people of Nigeria on his historic election to the presidency of this special session. Our appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for the useful documentation it has provided for this session. At the outset, let me pledge the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

The holding of this special session could not have been more timely, coming as it does at a time of growing concern among the cynics and optimists as to whether or not the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States has failed. It is not by accident that five years ago, in 1994, barely two years after the Rio Earth Summit, the Barbados Programme of Action came out as a specific blueprint for the protection of small island developing States and our fragile environment. As a blueprint, it embodied not only the hopes and aspiration of the citizens of the small island developing States themselves, but also the wishes and goodwill of the international community for a better and sustainable

development of the small island developing States. It is, likewise, no accident that we, in this era of five-year reviews of major world conferences, should now devote this two-day special session to reviewing and appraising the implementation of the Programme today.

For my delegation, the interdependence of humankind and of the nations is an undeniable imperative. Whatever the difficulties or successes, one is bound to have a ripple effect on the other. No single man, woman or country can afford to be an island unto itself, not even the smallest island developing State. This is the basis of our oneness within the United Nations family.

To what extent was this oneness was spelt out in the aims and objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action? How many of these goals have been achieved in the five years of its operationalization? What are the constraints? How much remains to be done? How do we go about it?

These are some of the flashpoints which my delegation believes will add value to our debate in the review and appraisal exercise, and I intend to take up some of them briefly, one by one.

As will be recalled, the Barbados Programme of Action called for national, regional and international action in 14 priority areas, ranging from sectoral concerns, such as fresh water, climate change, biodiversity, marine resources and tourism, to cross-cutting issues, such as human resources development and financing and support needed to put the Programme into action.

The Nigerian Government's commitment to the issue of the environment since Barbados has increased, especially with the creation of the new Ministry of Environment — and I happen to be the first Minister of Environment. Of particular importance is the question of freshwater resources and waste management. These have a severe impact on our countries, especially the small island developing States. They are also crucial questions to ask, since Nigeria currently derives over 90 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings from revenue accruing from oil exploration activities in the coastal environment. This is the basis of Nigeria's commitment to protection from oil spillage and the dumping of toxic and hazardous waste, chemicals and radioactive materials in the coastal areas.

The need for universal commitment to such preventive measures has become more pressing due to the isolation and oceanic location of some small island developing States and their total dependence on a marine and limited terrestrial base, which render them highly vulnerable to contamination from such waste. As will be recalled, Nigeria initiated the Dump-Watch Programme in the West African subregion to monitor illegal dumping of hazardous waste in coastal and territorial waters.

Evidence of action taken towards realization of the goals of Barbados can be further seen in the activities of multilateral institutions, such as the African Development Bank (ADB), in which Nigeria is a major stakeholder. The ADB devoted $701 million over the period 1997-1998 on six African small island developing States. We are also appreciative of funding activities of other agencies, including the European Development Fund, the Global Environment Facility and, of course, the United Nations Development Programme.

My delegation is also aware that the small island developing States, on their part, have made considerable efforts in formulating policies and plans of action to strengthen regulatory frameworks and national institutions for implementing the Barbados Programme of Action. As much as possible, these small island developing States have encouraged domestic investment by the private sector and have attracted foreign investment.

These efforts, however, have not amounted to much progress because of certain basic inhibiting factors. For instance, the Programme of Action has been seriously hampered by inadequate financial support, a factor which could be further traced to incapacitation by heavy external debt obligations, a decline in the flow of official development assistance, poor human resources development and lack of health care facilities.

The small island developing States are also hampered by inadequate institutional capacity for the enforcement of environmental legislation and regulation. Assistance from Governments, international agencies and other bodies has always come too late and has been too little to make the necessary positive impact.

It is also evident that these small island developing States have neither benefited from globalization nor escaped the myriad adverse consequences of marginalization which it has entailed for developing countries. The odds are therefore decidedly against the small island developing States, and they must negotiate effectively for better terms. The net effect is that the level of poverty in small island developing States has been on the increase. The pervasiveness of poverty has undermined the ability of States to provide basic social

services, including education, nutrition, clean water, urban planning and development, thereby undercutting the capacity of the citizens in these States to contribute effectively and positively towards the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

That is not all. The risks from the adverse effects of frequent climate change and the lack of capacity to adapt to these phenomena have exposed the small island developing States to extremely damaging natural disasters, primarily in the form of cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides and droughts. This has had an adverse impact on the implementation of the Programme of Action in the area of tourism, which is one of the main lifelines of the small island developing countries.

In conclusion, this special session urgently needs to come up with an integrated means of further implementing the Programme of Action in the areas of capacity-building, resource mobilization, finance, transfer of environmentally sound technology, the problem of external debt obligation, poverty eradication and natural disaster reduction measures.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Tu'ataumoepeau Tupou, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Tonga.

Mr. Tu'ataumoepeau Tupou (Tonga): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Kingdom of Tonga. In so doing, may I thank the heads of State and Government, as well as Foreign Ministers, for their warm words of welcome on our admission to the United Nations.

The special session on small island developing States is a timely forum to assess the progress of the Barbados Programme of Action that was formulated five years ago. The Programme was a crucial achievement which envisaged a joint action and partnership between small island nations and the international community in the pursuit of sustainable development. In assessing the progress of the last five years, we acknowledge the contribution of our partners, such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the European Union, Canada and the People's Republic of China, as well as the United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, in our sustainable development effort.

We have undertaken steps at the national and regional level to formulate policies and strategies to achieve these goals. These include the implementation of a national environment management strategy, a new fisheries policy, a coastal management plan and environmental legislation. We have exceeded the provisions of the key environmental conventions and are currently implementing the provisions of the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The South Pacific region recognizes that development must be both economical and ecologically sound. At this level, we, together with other member States of the South Pacific Forum, have adopted a framework policy for protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable development of tourism. Other regional initiatives play an important role, and we therefore support the draft resolution of the Caribbean Community to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

The international community must recognize that our development efforts are greatly impeded by factors beyond our control. We are constrained by limitation of land, scarcity of natural resources, fragile environments, small domestic markets and vulnerability to natural disasters. These difficulties have been compounded by the increasingly competitive nature of the global economy, which has adversely affected our economies in trade, investment and capital markets. In this regard, we welcome the recognition by the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat Task Force of the difficulties faced by our small States. Our region, through the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, has developed an environmental vulnerability index that reflects more accurately the realities of small island developing States. Economic vulnerability ought to be a criterion in considering special deferential treatment of these States.

It is evident that further assistance is needed to advance our goals for sustainable development and the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Consequently, we join other small island nations in calling on the international community for urgent action in the areas of climate change, renewable energy, sustainable tourism development, agriculture and fisheries, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources and resources for the preservation of diversity.

The development of the fisheries sector is of prime importance to us, and we welcome developments such as the ongoing negotiations by the Pacific region with distant water fishing nations and other fishing entities in an effort to establish a real fisheries organization, as envisaged in article 64 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, it is of concern to us that the donor community has been reluctant to assist the region in other areas of priority, such as surveying the continental shelf. It is one thing to have the potential to lay claim to a continental shelf; but it is altogether different to be able to do so under article 76 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. In like terms, the region is going to have to be much more proactive in pursuing its seabed mining interests.

Telecommunications and information technology present new opportunities for our small islands. However, the scattered character of our geographical situation renders telecommunications and communication very costly. We recognize the implications of accessible, affordable telecommunications for economic development, and we call on the international community to help us pursue our role in the global knowledge economy by assisting with capacity-building, transfer of appropriate technology and information management, strengthening of our health and education systems and development of new markets.

Finally, it is important that a comprehensive review process now be instituted to monitor the progress and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We call for the improved coordination of activities undertaken by United Nations specialized agencies and our respective regional organizations. In this regard, we fully support joint initiatives such as the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) to assist our stakeholders in the coordination and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Abdelrahim Ahmed Khalil, representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Khalil (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express our satisfaction at the holding of this special session of the General Assembly under the wise guidance of the President. I would also like to thank the Secretariat and, in particular, the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development for his successful preparation of this session.

The fact that this special session is taking place today to review and evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States confirms the dedication shown by the international community since 1994 in seeing that these countries' needs are met. This would take into account their specific situation and their environmental and development problems, their vulnerability regarding the environment and the efforts they are undertaking in order to achieve sustainable development. They also face specific difficulties compounded by their material and financial situation, as well as difficulties in deriving benefits from the world economic environment and from the globalization and liberalization of international trade.

The international community must recognize that these countries occupy a very important part of the world's oceans and seas and must appreciate their efforts in preserving sea resources. They require that we shoulder our responsibilities to help them preserve their resources, in accordance with the Barbados Programme of Action, as a comprehensive basis for their sustainable development, and in accordance with national and regional strategies.

The international community must also hail the struggle waged by the small island developing States in facing the climate changes taking place. An example of this considerable responsibility is the suffering we all experienced two weeks ago because of hurricane Floyd in this city, which hosts United Nations Headquarters; this highlighted the enormous difference between the power of the hurricane and the capacity for rapid response to its devastating effects.

The delegation of the Sudan shares the hopes of the island countries that the results of this special session will put an end to their vulnerability. We need to take all necessary measures to consolidate the small island States' approach to achieving sustainable development. To do so, we must commit ourselves, including the international financial and trade institutions, to providing the environment necessary to encourage the integration of the economies of the small island developing States into the international economy through the following measures: consolidating an environment favourable to investment and foreign assistance; mobilization and provision of new financial resources; transfer of environmentally sound technology; consolidation of capacities, including teaching, training and the development of institutions and their capacity to compete and to have access to all markets; and diversification of their national economies. Work needs to be done in order to determine degrees of vulnerability, taking into account all the specific environmental situations and economic frailties of these States as indicators that would supplement all the other criteria that can assist in taking decisions regarding preferential treatment for these States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Ali Hachani, Chairman of the delegation of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): May I say how happy we are that the President is leading this special session of the General Assembly devoted to an evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We recognize in him an experienced diplomat, and this provides assurances of the success of the work of this session.

On behalf of my delegation, I also wish to convey our congratulations to the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the report submitted to us and on the work accomplished.

Tunisia welcomes the holding of this important session at the threshold of a new century, a time marked by profound international change and at a critical stage in the work for comprehensive development undertaken by our developing countries. This session provides us with a favourable opportunity to undertake an in-depth study and evaluation of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and, furthermore, is an eloquent demonstration of the will and determination of the international community to pursue the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Tunisia reaffirms its solidarity with the small island States and shares their concerns and legitimate aspirations to progress and prosperity.

The international community has a special responsibility with respect to these States. Situated at the heart of the oceans and seas, these countries exercise a special responsibility with respect to the protection of the marine environment and the conservation of important biological diversity.

The small island States face special problems that affect them to varying degrees, relating, in particular, to their land area, to their modest resources, to their ecological vulnerability and to their vulnerability to climate change. Hence the urgent need to implement the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of these countries.

To the specific problems we have already mentioned, we might add the problems linked to globalization and to the liberalization of trade. Even though it has opened the way to the establishment of more extensive cooperative relations, this double phenomenon has nevertheless had a negative impact on the economies of the small island developing States and has complicated their efforts to integrate into the world economy — particularly in the spheres of trade, investment, commodities and financial markets. This situation has given rise to increasing unemployment, poverty and the marginalization of the weakest sectors of populations.

Tunisia is particularly pleased by the great efforts that have been made by small island States — often in difficult circumstances — to implement the Programme of Action for sustainable development. Tunisia welcomes the determination of the small island developing States to meet new and old challenges in order to attain the goals set by the Programme of Action through the elaboration of new national and regional policies that are aimed, in particular, at better integration into the world economy and better coordination of their strategies in the political, social and environmental spheres in order to better address and reduce the problems they face. Nevertheless, the problems faced by the small island States, like all developing countries, make it impossible for them today to carry out those strategies of sustainable development without the assistance of the international community and, in particular, of the rich countries.

Thus, we believe that the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development must rapidly be translated into action, in particular, those recommendations that relate to the mobilization of financial resources, the creation of a climate favourable to investment, the transfer of ecologically rational technologies and capacity-strengthening, particularly with respect to education, training, consciousness-raising and institutional strengthening.

The World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should devote special attention to the need to assist small island States to benefit from globalization and trade liberalization by facilitating access for their export products to world markets, by granting them favourable tariff treatment and by strengthening their negotiating capacities in the multilateral trade system.

The establishment of balanced international cooperation and the achievement of global development require the strengthening of partnership relations between the countries of the North and those of the South on the one hand and, horizontally, between the countries of the South themselves on the other. We believe that South-South cooperation in the area of sustainable development should be consolidated and take more concrete form. In this respect, I reaffirm here Tunisia's readiness to share its experience with all interested parties in every domain, in particular in the areas of environmental protection, tourism and the eradication of poverty, in a framework of partnership, cooperation and solidarity.

In conclusion, may I express my delegation's satisfaction with the efforts made to prepare the documents that are to be adopted by the Assembly at the conclusion of this debate. I hope that their unanimous adoption will enable the small island States to overcome their difficulties.

The Acting President *(spoke in French):* I now call on Mr. Francisco Tudela, Chairman of the delegation of Peru.

Mr. Tudela (Peru) *(spoke in Spanish):* It is a great honour for me to represent Peru at this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, devoted to a review and evaluation of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This session reflects the renewed effort of the international community to implement international cooperation as a means to achieve development and conservation of the environment in more than 40 countries.

With the guidance and great experience of the President, we believe that these objectives — proposed together by developing and developed countries in Barbados five years ago — will result in new, more important achievements today and in the coming years.

The Barbados Global Conference represented the firm commitment of the small island developing States to promote cooperation on the part of the international community on the basis of agreements reached at the Earth Summit in 1992. Peru recognizes the harmonization promoted by small island developing States to overcome obstacles to their development.

Nonetheless, we wish to emphasize that as environmental and economic conditions for the development of the small island developing States have become more complex, progress in commitments to international assistance has met with difficulties. An immediate and specific response by the international community is seen only when there are regional emergencies or natural catastrophes.

The devastating effects of the El Niño Southern Oscillation dramatically illustrate the vulnerability of most of the small island developing States.

The required sustainable management and training should not be absent from responses to the human needs at the centre of all efforts to achieve full development. It is my delegation's opinion that the basic importance of all joint efforts to achieve the recovery of the environment and its sustainable use for future generations lies in this. Today, we not only reaffirm the Barbados Programme of Action, but we acknowledge that the vulnerability and the threat of an expansion of poverty are worsened by the impact of climatic factors exacerbated by the greenhouse effect.

The existing prevention, mitigation and reconstruction mechanisms will not suffice in the next few years unless we can achieve further progress in gaining a profound understanding of the origin of these phenomena and can learn how to deal with them effectively.

Peru fully acknowledges the contribution that the small island developing States are making in negotiating processes relating to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I would particularly like to emphasize the significant contribution made by the Caribbean States within the Latin America and Caribbean regional consultation mechanisms. The progress achieved in waste disposal management by the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica and Saint Kitts and Nevis, among other countries, has been important and encouraging in the field of environmental management.

I would also like to underline the commitment of the small island developing States to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which all of them have ratified. These indicators prove that the response by the small island developing States has been firm in spite of adverse circumstances during these five years. The Barbados Programme of Action holds valuable potential for an increase in international cooperation and understanding, with great dynamism and full consciousness of the needs of mankind and his environment.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Chairman of the delegation of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me say that it is a pleasure for me to extend to the President and to all members of the Bureau my congratulations on their election.

I would also like to congratulate the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Kiribati, and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission to membership in the United Nations.

The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, with regard to the evaluation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, is of particular importance. The 1994 Barbados Conference and its Declaration represent an important basis for defining the future of development in small island developing States. We are fully aware that the main responsibility for development lies with the States themselves. However, the international community also has a major responsibility towards those States, given the constraints burdening their development — natural disasters due to climate changes, greenhouse gas emissions and the climatic phenomena we have seen recently, including drought, hurricanes and floods. These have led to the destruction of many harvests as well as to other material damage. They have also had serious repercussions on development plans and projects. Moreover, the ever-growing gap between developed and developing countries and the impact of globalization on the economies of developing countries also represent constraints on development in these States.

In order for small island and coastal States to overcome these crises there must be joint and concerted efforts. While it is up to island States to determine their priorities and to prepare and implement well thought-out development plans through their local efforts or with bilateral and international assistance, developed countries also have a special responsibility in terms of developing the resources of small island developing States. Indeed, it has been the policies and industrial activities of developed States that have led to the climate change and global warming that have had the catastrophic effects I have just mentioned. These industrial States therefore have a moral responsibility towards island States. We must therefore find a common understanding and give generous assistance to complete development plans and projects in the small island developing States. Otherwise, the problems will continue, for their own efforts will not be sufficient to ensure the desired development.

Moreover, the major international financial institutions have an important and central role in ensuring the development of small island developing States. These States need greater flexibility from international financial institutions. International crises need to be contained and their impact must be reduced as quickly as possible. In this regard, we cannot forget the role of civil society and public affairs institutions, which could help small island developing States to deal with natural disasters and to implement social development plans.

Qatar, which is aware of the international community's important role in helping small island developing States and other developing countries achieve social development, hopes that the States of the developed world will play their proper role in supporting the economies of developing countries and in reducing the consequences of globalization on our fragile economies. The prevailing phenomenon of globalization has widened the gap between developed and developing countries and has made the economies of developing nations dependent on those of developed countries and has set unfair challenges before our States. We hope this session will ensure the achievement of the goals we have set for ourselves.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Chairman of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): Five years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, the United Nations is holding this special session of the General Assembly that is drawing the attention of the world community to the implementation of the Programme of Action — an issue of great importance to the sustainable development of these embattled but courageous countries, as the President characterized them this morning.

During the past five years, States have taken many courageous initiatives and measures to implement the Programme and to promote sustainable development, despite many difficulties and obstacles. Climate change and sea level rise in themselves are far beyond the small islands' control. These islands, by themselves, are limited in size and resources. For them land degradation, loss of forest cover and waste mismanagement are serious causes for concern. They are obliged to import virtually

everything, thereby driving up costs even higher. Like for landlocked countries, freight costs as a percentage of import values for small island developing States are considerably higher than those of coastal and developed countries.

In the light of their limited resources and options, island nations are seeking some kind of compensatory mechanism or assistance while they try to restructure their economies to cope with these problems. For this purpose, small island developing States are actively working with the international community through the Alliance of Small Island States, as well as urging the major industrial countries to curb emissions of greenhouse gases.

Through cooperation among themselves, the island States have gained a measure of political clout that has been most pronounced in the negotiations on climate change. They are now pursuing the use of this cooperation to further their economic strategies.

They have, individually and as a group, carried out a number of projects and programmes to promote sustainable development.

However, despite their efforts, the ability of the small island developing States to fully implement these projects and programmes is limited. The sharp downward trend of official development assistance has become a serious constraint on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. It is therefore imperative for the donor community to mobilize and provide adequate financial resources and technical assistance to enable the small island developing States to promote their sustainable development more effectively.

In this connection, I should like to note that the developing countries, with their specific problems and needs, attach great importance to the upcoming high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development.

We all agree that while offering opportunities, globalization and liberalization have negatively affected many developing countries, especially those with specific problems and needs like the small island developing States and landlocked developing countries.

The new round of multilateral trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization could promote the further reduction of trade barriers and provide small island developing States with greater access to export markets for their products. Therefore, the special circumstances of those States, just like those of the landlocked developing countries, need to be addressed at these negotiations.

My delegation also supports the proposal to supplement existing development indicators, for example criteria based on the gross domestic product with vulnerability indexes, taking into account the special problems and needs of the special groups of countries I mentioned earlier.

Like many previous speakers, I should like to underline the importance of displaying in deed the necessary political will on the part of all countries and international organizations, especially the donor community, to cooperate more closely with the countries that face specific problems and needs.

Mongolia supports the draft text on the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, which underlines the importance of closer partnership among the national and local authorities of small island States, non-governmental organizations and private businesses, bilateral and multilateral donors, and regional and international organizations.

May I express my delegation's hope that this special session will provide the international community with the needed blueprint that will enable the Programme to be fully implemented.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Leonardo Santos Simão, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique): On this auspicious occasion of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, I wish, on behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, to express my profound appreciation to Mr. Gurirab and to the Secretary-General for convening this session for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, is an important initiative presenting multiple ways of solving problems related to the environment and development confronted by small island developing States and deserving, therefore, our common support.

Indeed, the issues of climate change, soil erosion, global warming, sea level rise, coastal and marine resources, natural and environmental disasters, biodiversity resources, waste management and freshwater resources are among those that all developing countries face, in particular small island nations, in an increasingly competitive global economy.

Mozambique, as a least developed country, shares similar problems to those of small island developing States. My country, with about 2,700 kilometres of coastline, where the majority of the population and cities are located, faces serious environmental problems resulting from demographic pressure and economic development activities. Mozambique is equally concerned with the issues of marine pollution, unsustainable fishing practices of other nations, transportation of hazardous and nuclear materials through the exclusive economic zones, which are also the concern of small island developing nations.

We are here today to render our solidarity and support to our sister countries and recognize the efforts that are being exerted by those countries and the small island developing States. The effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action requires the full support of the international community in the spirit of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21.

We strongly believe that by doing so, we will be recognizing the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of small islands to improve their quality of life and increase their prosperity while remaining strongly committed to preserving the environment. As envisaged in the Barbados Programme of Action, developing and developed countries should act together and share the responsibilities and fruits of their partnership.

Small island developing nations represent a particular case as far as environment and development challenges are concerned. Their geographical location and the fact that they share large areas of the oceans make them extremely vulnerable to the unstoppable forces of nature as well as to man-made disasters. We have seen how storms, typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones affect human lives, damaging the infrastructures, economy and social fabric of these countries. The recent tragedy attributed to the El Niño phenomenon that also affected several countries of the Caribbean is a sad reminder of what Mother Nature can do to all of us. While welcoming the prompt emergency assistance provided by the international community to alleviate the suffering of the population affected in small islands, we urge the international community to work harder to reduce the impact of El Niño and natural disasters.

On the other hand, small island developing States are also suffering the adverse impact of the current international economic situation. Indeed, small island nations are bracing themselves against the gathering forces of globalization and trade liberalization, which threaten to alter dramatically their economies and hamper efforts to promote sustainable development.

In this regard, it is imperative that the developed countries ensure the transfer of technology and technical assistance and reverse the downward trend of official development assistance if they really want to help the developing world to attain sustainable development.

A holistic approach to these issues will certainly be required so that developing countries can have an opportunity to achieve sustainable development and the protection of the environment. The entire United Nations system, the donor community and the international community at large are called upon to play a pivotal role in designing the most effective strategies to ensure the future success of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The expectations are high, and the international community bears great responsibility, as envisaged at the Rio Summit and in Agenda 21. Mozambique looks forward to the outcome of this special session and to the deliberations and actions that will follow. After all, the agenda of small island developing States is also the agenda of all of us.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.

United Nations A/S-22/PV.3

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fourth session
Twenty-second Special Session

3rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 September 1999, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The President: I first give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Briceño, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment of Belize.

Mr. Briceño (Belize): The Belize delegation, Sir, expresses its satisfaction at your election to the presidency of this very important session.

Like most in our group, Belize is a small country. Although not an island, Belize encounters problems similar to those that beset others in our group. The Belizean economy, already limited in size, is an open one. Our economic destiny is in large measure determined by the prevailing forces of the international economy, forces which are beyond our control. Our already vulnerable low-lying coasts and hundreds of islands are annually threatened by disasters, placing our fragile economy at risk and threatening to destroy our precious environmental resources. Trade liberalization is resulting in continuous shrinkage of our access to already limited preferential markets. These are the issues which the Organization must contend with as we face the challenges of the new millennium.

While there are some inescapable challenges presented to us by Mother Nature, we must question and confront those that are caused by people and institutions. We in the group of small island developing States must ensure that those institutions charged with regulating world trade secure opportunities for our growth and development. They must recognize that the continued sustainability of the developed countries is tied to that of smaller, developing nations.

We the developing countries are aware that economic diversification, although a monumental task, is a necessity. It is never easy to change traditional commodities and methods of production, but we understand the urgency. Our commitment to fair trade compels us to redesign our economies. We are also cognizant of our limited financial and technological resources, factors which handicap us in our diversification process. The Seattle round of trade negotiations to be held under the auspices of the World Trade Organization must be characterized by a willingness to implement the necessary reforms to ameliorate the negative impact on the post-Uruguay agreements. Small island developing States can and should benefit from the effects of globalization and trade liberalization along with our developed partners. This is the greatest challenge of our era.

Because we know that people are a country's most valuable resource, we have placed a high priority on human development. To achieve sustainable development we must ensure the well-being of our people by providing

00-40438 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

them with decent housing, adequate health services, access to clean drinking water, proper education and proper nutrition. We must protect and nurture our youth, incorporating them into our sustainable development plans. We must include women at all levels of our discussion and action. Everyone is needed and should be included in this great endeavour.

To demonstrate our commitment to capacity-building, the Government of Belize, among many other endeavours, has spent the last year increasing our efforts to provide our people with access to better education and the opportunity to take advantage of it.

But we are very aware that we cannot accomplish all our objectives alone. We need the assistance of our more developed partners. In this respect, we must express our concern at the significant decline in official development assistance in recent years.

The preservation of our environment is also crucial to our survival. Large sectors of our populations depend on our seas, along with the resources of our forests and jungles, for their survival. We are constantly trying to stop the destruction of these precious resources. Yet still today, large corporations, which in many instances have more economic power than many States, are willing to destroy our environment in pursuit of economic wealth. Hazardous wastes are constantly being dumped in our oceans and seas; rain forests are being wiped out; and the emission of gases from industrial countries continues to deplete the ozone layer. Belize's extremely valuable barrier reef, which has been declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is under constant threat of destruction from the dumping of waste in international waters, waste that washes onto our reef and our shores. This is a serious situation, and the international community should insist that the relevant regulations be enforced. We must stop the transportation of radioactive and other hazardous materials through the Caribbean Sea. A major catastrophe would have a negative and irreversible impact on our environment. We must do everything possible to protect the Caribbean Sea and to make it a special area in the context of sustainable development.

It has been seven years since we successfully negotiated the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At Rio the world made a commitment to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases to levels consistent with those of 1990. Today, however, the levels of emissions, primarily those of the developed world, are much higher. Small island and low-lying developing States suffer the consequences. In 1995 and again in 1998 we experienced major coral-reef bleaching in Belize, caused as a result of abnormally warm sea temperatures. Last year, hurricane Mitch caused tremendous damage to the Central American coastline and to our fragile barrier reef. In the eastern Caribbean, annual hurricanes continue to pose a challenge to development. El Niño and La Niña episodes are getting more intense, exacerbating floods and droughts around the world. These recent catastrophes are the result of the last decade being the warmest of the century.

The international community must reverse this trend by taking immediate action, beginning with our developed partners, which legally committed themselves to stabilizing and lowering their emissions. In addition, we should collectively negotiate agreements to stem the rising trend of emissions and greenhouse gases. We urge our more developed partners to comply with their obligation to provide developing countries with new and additional resources to address climate change.

We are at a crucial point in history. Five years ago we, the members of the group of small island developing States decided that sustainable development was essential to our survival. We believed then, as we do now, that our challenges, among others, were to reduce the vulnerability of small States, provide the mechanisms for sustainable development and improve the capacity needed to foster greater economic independence. To achieve this, international cooperation and support is fundamental. We must move to strengthen our partnerships, to establish trade mechanisms to allow for greater participation by small island developing States, and most important, to renew our support for the Barbados Programme of Action. These actions would be a great cornerstone of true sustainable development.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Danny Wallace, Minister of State at the Department of Environment and Local Government of Ireland.

Mr. Wallace (Ireland): It is an honour for me to address this special session of the General Assembly on behalf of Ireland. I fully endorse the remarks made yesterday by Finland on behalf of the European Union and associated States.

Ireland's history as an underdeveloped State on the periphery of Europe, and our recent intensive development process, give us a valuable insight into

many of the concerns of the small island States. Some major challenges which they face in an acute form, we too have had to deal with. How can small economies, far from major markets, deal with globalization? How does a small island State reconcile valuable tourism promotion with environmental protection? What are the best strategies for developing marine resources and protecting coastal regions? These are familiar to us.

Ireland which, by choice, has no nuclear generating capacity, also faces problems with nuclear waste produced by others and with its subsequent reprocessing. We all know and fear that an accident in the transshipment of such waste would have devastating consequences for the marine ecosystems of the small islands affected.

We have a natural affinity with other small islands, most particularly islands confronted with severe poverty and high unemployment. Over the past five years, the small island developing States have made a tremendous effort to achieve sustainable development. We are therefore engaged in and committed to the Barbados Plan of Action and its implementation.

Ireland's programme of development assistance is increasing steadily. We have trebled our official development assistance expenditure since Rio and are committed to making further steady progress towards the United Nations target figure of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

The Barbados Programme of Action and the preparations for this special session have produced a wealth of useful material. We have identified the challenges, and we have produced the strategy. What is now needed is specific, concerted action and measurable results.

The documents before us reflect the complexity of the problems facing communities which are often remote and underdeveloped, with limited land and natural resources, and which are heavily dependent on fragile ecosystems. These vulnerable peoples need the express solidarity of the international community if they are to survive and prosper.

Globalization and the rapid development of electronic commerce can be grasped as helpful instruments to diminish the handicap of distance, providing the appropriate strategies are put in place at the national level. However, there is also a danger that poor communities, ill-equipped to take advantage of the new technologies, could be further marginalized. Small island States could be especially at risk. We recognize the potential benefits of the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) and look forward to its further development.

Ireland is placing a new emphasis on small island States, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, in our overall multilateral development policies. We hope to work further with multilateral development agencies in supporting the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in certain key areas.

For example, on the basis of our national experience, we have a particular interest in trade issues and the integration of developing countries, especially least developed countries, into the global economy. We are already engaged in trade capacity-building projects in the Caribbean and South Pacific, in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

We are also supporting the small island developing States in their partnership with the European Union. The mandate for the post-Lomé negotiations provides that the vulnerability of small island States will be taken into account. As these important negotiations reach their crucial stages, we will be there, working to ensure that agreement is reached in such key areas as trade, investment, commodities and financial cooperation. The European Union's partnership with small island States, anchored in the Lomé Conventions, must continue to operate successfully.

In considering the challenges facing small island States, the word vulnerability inevitably and frequently arises. Thankfully, the international community now comprehends much more fully that many of these islands are particularly vulnerable. At the same time, however, there is a worrying lack of precision as to what is meant by vulnerable. We must also clarify and define the relationship between assessed vulnerability and international development assistance resources.

The Barbados Programme of Action called for work on indices that reflect small island States' economic vulnerability and ecological fragility. We welcome and support all the work and progress which has been made to date. We particularly welcome the Committee for Development Policy's recognition that vulnerability should be taken into account in the least developed country classification.

However, the matter is complex. Further analysis is required before indices, and the uses to which they might be put, can be agreed. We believe it would be useful for

all participants in this area, including the relevant United Nations bodies, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank, the affected small island States and statistical experts, to come together to share information and chart the way forward. The next global conference on least developed countries, in 2001, should provide a useful forum for assessing progress on the least developed country aspects of this issue.

In examining the challenges of small islands from a global perspective, there is always a risk that we could sight of the core issues in our desire to ensure that every dimension is included. Issues such as poverty eradication, the development of human and institutional resources and closer regional cooperation will remain at the heart of the strategies of small island States to achieve sustainable development.

Human resource capacity is a key component of development. The small island States are characterized by the resilience, independence and courage of their peoples. These talents are being harnessed to develop the institutions which will help these States preserve their unique identities, while also managing the impact of globalization and climate change.

Strong domestic institutions, capable of preparing and implementing sustainable development strategies, are essential. These institutions, and the people behind them, need to capitalize on all the unique human qualities which are the shared strength of island peoples.

As Ireland has found in Europe, regional cooperation is also an important component of development. We support the small island States in their efforts to develop and enhance regional partnerships, including in the development of their regional trade arrangements.

One of the key messages from the small island developing States donor meeting earlier this year was that the international community, in its partnership with these islands, must improve its coordination and delivery. In our cooperation we must emphasize that the Government is in the driver's seat and that it sets the direction. We must not undermine our development cooperation with small, remote and vulnerable communities through a plethora of uncoordinated strategies and programmes. As many of these islands are uniquely vulnerable, it is essential that our partnership with them be coherent and tailored to meet their particular circumstances.

While many of the problems confronting small island States are common problems of development, their front-line exposure to the consequences of climate change is unique. Rising water levels pose a challenge which goes beyond the core issue of development and requires coordinated international action to resolve. The European Union has played a leading role in confronting the climate change process and has consistently argued for the highest possible emission reduction levels. Ireland is fully committed to meeting its own target under the Kyoto commitments and also to contributing to the achievement of the European Union target.

In addition to the impact of climate change, many small islands also suffer natural disasters from cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. The Secretary-General has recently pointed out the sharp increase in the number of such climatic events over the past 30 years. Such disasters have greatly added to the difficulties of many small communities in their struggle to develop.

Ireland also welcomes the recent decision to improve coordination within the United Nations on issues relating to the oceans and seas. The new coordination process should facilitate improved analysis and the presentation of more coherent and action-oriented proposals to the General Assembly.

This special session of the General Assembly has focused our attention on the major problems and challenges confronting small island developing States. In the years to come, we must continue our urgent common effort to protect and preserve them, particularly the most vulnerable, and to work with them for their sustainable development. At the end of the day, their future development is in their hands. It is our shared responsibility to support them in achieving their goals.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen.

Mr. Ba-Jammal (Yemen) (spoke in Arabic): Allow me to express to you, Sir, the congratulations of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen on your election to the presidency of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. I am full of hope that we will realize some of the progress direly needed at this critical stage in the life of our peoples. I would like to renew to the Commission on Sustainable Development, through you and through the members of the Bureau, the commitment

of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen to work with it to arrive at a successful conclusion of our work.

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak for a second time on behalf of the Republic of Yemen on an issue closely related to the future of some peoples of the world. In particular, this issue relates to the developing and least developed countries. It deals with the future of people who find themselves in unique and complex geographic situations — such as island States, desert States or hinterland States. However, these situations exist on all continents.

Human beings, ever since they emerged on earth, have never had a choice as to their place of birth or their families or neighbours. Therefore, the international community must improve the life of human beings on this planet, wherever they may be. The international community must provide assistance to those who confront unique and difficult natural challenges and complications of sustainable development.

Our main task is not confined to the challenges posed by nature and geography alone, but also to special and inherited problems resulting from relations between States, peoples and societies. The injustice inflicted upon us by our brethren is more cruel than natural disasters, though the latter wreak havoc on our lives and leave a trail of destruction and suffering.

I believe that most, if not all, the problems that we are addressing today are man-made. They are brought about by conflict of interests and by the different ways of achieving different objectives. They are not always a result of man's struggle with nature.

After achieving its blessed unity in 1990, the Republic of Yemen now has a coastline that stretches more than 2,500 kilometres. Yemen's sovereign territorial waters include more than 133 islands of different sizes and characteristics. Most of these islands are populated or used by Yemeni citizens for fishing or seasonal residences or for temporary marine and communications facilities, in various maritime conditions.

As the coastline of Yemen touches the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, and Yemen's islands are located in all of these gulfs and seas, the Republic's geography makes it a neighbour to many States to the north, south, east and west. Thus, it stands at a crossroads between Asia and Africa.

This means that our concern with the issue of development in small islands or island States is genuine and objective. Our concern reflects Yemen's desire to develop close regional cooperative relationships that involve, *inter alia*, economy, trade, marine issues, development, environmental protection, emigration, culture and tourism. These relationships should be mutually beneficial to the people of the region.

In addressing this subject, we should not be emotional or utopian; rather, we should discuss it from the point of view of using regional partnerships to prepare these States to face the overwhelming torrent of globalization. There is no doubt that violations of human rights and underdevelopment contribute to destroying societies and to causing violence. Although many efforts are being made in the fields of economic and social development, many other efforts are being stymied by lack of technical knowledge and infrastructure, including the weakness or absence of modern administrative capacity.

It is very important to proceed from famine relief efforts to sustainable development. In this way, the international community can improve the capacities of Member States and achieve balanced partnerships.

Resolving to deal with these problems will put the Commission on Sustainable Development in greater touch with the basic needs of societies. We have to avoid quick fixes. We need to develop basic infrastructures that can address our problems. At the same time, the current situation obliges us to increase our overall effort, but our capacities will always fall short of our needs. The burdens that we face will always be among the basic criteria of sustainable development. We support all efforts to find a solution within a supportive international environment.

We appeal to the international community and all its agencies and bodies to contribute positively to the efforts of Governments and peoples, including the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Yemen, to achieve sustainable development. Let us make this a real partnership that reflects positively on everyone.

In conclusion, we hope that this session will lead to the achievement of its noble and humanistic objectives. We also hope that the international community will be able to undertake practical steps to turn these objectives into reality.

The President: I next give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shunmugan Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): At the outset, let me associate my delegation with the statements earlier made by the delegation of Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and by the delegation of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Five years ago, when we convened the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we recognized how vulnerable island States were to the ebb and tide of international trade and economy. In 1999, many of these same challenges still exist. Some have been made more difficult by the effects of climate change and by the impact of the 1997 financial crisis.

Most island States have small populations, limited human resources, small domestic markets and narrow economic bases. Without natural resources, many tend to be dependent on a single economic activity such as tourism, fisheries or a single commodity. This leaves island States vulnerable.

Yet there has been no lack of commitment on the part of small island developing States in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and Agenda 21, which arose out of the Earth Summit. More than others, island States understand the importance of protecting the environment. Rising sea levels, resulting from global warming, pose the greatest risks to us. Natural disasters can be most devastating for us.

Singapore has also had to cope with many of the challenges laid out in the Barbados Programme. Our total land area is only 648 square kilometres, but our population is now more than 3 million. The primary challenge has therefore been how best to use the limited land to sustain our economic growth and yet achieve a decent standard of living for our people. Our philosophy has been to take an integrated approach in formulating and implementing programmes that support these various needs. At the same time, we must be nimble enough to adapt to the changing natural and economic environment in which we live.

The management of our freshwater resources has been another challenge. Our long-standing national education campaigns have led to a community-wide effort to encourage water conservation and a sustainable pattern of consumption.

Singapore fully understands, therefore, how small island States have to cope with the numerous development problems, especially human resources development. In the early days of our development, we were fortunate to receive training from developed countries and international bodies. We believe that it is our turn now to help our fellow developing countries through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). Since 1992, more than 8,000 developing country participants have attended training courses in Singapore, ranging from port development and civil aviation to information technology, productivity, environment control and the English language.

However, not many of these participants come from island States. Between 1995 and 1998, only 12 per cent of all Singapore Cooperation Programme participants came from small island developing States. Therefore, over and above our existing SCP courses that are available to small island developing States, I am pleased to announce today a specially customized five-year technical cooperation package of 300 training places for small island developing States. We hope that, through this programme, the participation of small island developing States in the Singapore Cooperation Programme will be boosted. My officials at the Permanent Mission in New York will disseminate more details about the programme.

Singapore believes strongly in South-South cooperation. The spirit of the South is one in which those with the ability to help do so without conditions and without premeditated expectations. The resurgence of technical cooperation among developing countries is a significant demonstration that the countries of the South are dynamic, innovative and resourceful.

In closing, let me urge our developed partners to renew their commitment to helping small island developing States to further implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Baroness Amos, Government Spokeswoman for International Development in the House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Baroness Amos (United Kingdom): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address this special session of the General Assembly.

The United Kingdom Government has strong connections with many of the island countries represented here today. We are bound together by a shared history and culture. Our aim is to work in close partnership with small island developing countries towards a sustainable, secure and prosperous future.

The elimination of poverty is the overriding goal of the United Kingdom's international development agenda. Comprehensive as it is, we believe that the Barbados Programme of Action does not stress enough the central importance of the fight against poverty in the quest for sustainable development. Poverty eradication must be at the heart of our efforts to implement the Programme of Action.

Many small island developing States continue to be seriously affected by poverty. Even in some which have achieved middle-income status, there are poor and vulnerable groups which have yet to benefit from their countries' greater prosperity. By making poverty elimination the central objective of our partnership with small islands, we aim to ensure that everyone will benefit. This means carefully targeting our assistance, rigorous analysis of the causes and incidence of poverty, and reaching out to those who have become marginalized within their own countries. We hope that future discussions will pay greater attention to the people who are vulnerable, and seek solutions which will enable them to share the benefits of growth.

In recognition of one of the most pressing needs of small island developing States, our development assistance programme also focuses on the capacity-building and institutional strengthening required to help Governments to meet the needs of their people from health and education through to judicial reform and efforts to combat crime, corruption and illegal drugs.

We know that poverty eradication and sustainable development cannot be achieved by concessional finance alone. Trade is essential and is an area in which many small islands find themselves particularly vulnerable. Not only do they rely on a narrow range of exports, but they are also far from the centres of international decision-making which can have far-reaching impacts on their economies. Many cannot afford representation in Geneva, for instance, and risk missing out on the new opportunities offered by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

To help in this area, we are providing technical assistance to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat to help it negotiate the best deal possible for the region in the successor arrangements to the Lomé Convention. In the Pacific region, we are supporting a multilateral trade adviser at the Forum Secretariat. We have also offered training and technical assistance on the WTO and have led the call for the next WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle to take greater account of the needs of developing countries.

In recent discussions on the future of the banana regime, we have pressed the case of small island producers in an effort to ensure that the outcome recognizes the special vulnerability of those who are heavily dependent on banana production and who have only limited opportunities to diversify into new crops or other productive sectors.

Many speakers have stressed the vulnerability of small islands to climate change. The United Kingdom takes the problem very seriously. At home, we are strengthening our efforts to reduce our own carbon emissions; and in international negotiations, we are working hard to make a reality of the commitments made by the developed countries at Kyoto.

I made reference earlier to the importance of working in partnership. One aspect of partnership is practical help for sustainable development. When aid budgets almost everywhere are failing, I am pleased to say that the United Kingdom's aid budget is growing. The United Kingdom Government pledged to reverse the fall in aid spending and we are keeping our word. We are strengthening our development assistance programmes with our partners amongst the small island developing States and we continue to staff regional offices in both the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The United Nations has already established an ambitious set of international development targets to measure achievements globally. Many small island developing States are preparing their own national sustainable development strategies. Progress in furthering education, in improving health and in protecting the environment while using it wisely — as well as progress in promoting better governance and human rights — can all contribute to the goal of international well-being - the goal of poverty elimination. The British Government will play its full part in helping small islands to achieve this vital objective.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Right Honourable Donald McKinnon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): As we face the dawn of the new millennium, this special session addresses itself to the situation of small island developing States. At the outset, I would like to offer a special welcome into the ranks of the United Nations to three friends from the South Pacific: Kiribati, Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. We are delighted to see these nations take their place in the ranks of the United Nations. We are confident they will make a valuable and distinctive contribution to the work here.

Our task at this special session is to review progress with the Programme of Action agreed at Barbados, the blueprint for the sustainable development of small island States. In the words of the Declaration, it is to assess what has been achieved through "joint action undertaken with a sense of common purpose and partnership". *(A/CONF.167/9, annex I, part two, section III, para. 4)*

There are a number of issues of major concern to small island developing States at the present time. The effects of climate change and sea-level rise, gaining proper benefits from global trade liberalization, managing tourism so as to win economic benefits without undue damage to cultures, obtaining the flow of external financial resources necessary to achieve those goals and threats from hazardous wastes and marine pollution, just to name a few.

The Barbados Programme of Action proposed national, regional and international responsibilities in addressing these issues. We have undoubtedly made progress in many areas, but there is still a good distance to go to develop more effective partnerships which will assist the small island developing States to achieve sustainable economic development to make the kind of progress necessary to enable them to improve standards of living.

Five years ago we asked a great deal of small islands, and island heads of State at Barbados attested overwhelmingly that they were prepared to make the necessary commitment to their own development. The road, of course, has not been very easy, but that commitment has been evident and clearly still exists today. However, many of those small States have noted a weakening of commitment on the part of their partners in the developed world. At Barbados we entered into a commitment to assist small island developing States, but, as with the commitments we made at Rio, we have not delivered to the extent that both we and the small island States looked forward to at that time.

Achieving partnerships at the international level is a challenging task. It juxtaposes large countries with very small ones, requiring all parties to exercise tolerance and flexibility. In some cases, getting to grips with the smallness of small island developing States can be a challenge in itself for the international financial institutions.

As part of our partnership we must ensure an increase in flows of development assistance. Donor countries must make the greatest possible effort to reverse the decline in official development assistance that occurred in the decade up to 1997, and to reach agreed international targets.

Beyond the level of resources, the donor countries and agencies need to coordinate their approaches with each other, with individual partner Governments and, of course, with regional agencies.

The Rio Summit spelled out for us the facts of global interdependence. The essence of the message was that small islands cannot make it by themselves. Indeed, none of us can, and we fail to grasp this essential truth at our peril. Global problems such as marine pollution, climate change, sea-level rise and ozone depletion do not recognize national boundaries. Small island developing States contribute least of all to these problems, but they cannot avoid the effects of them; they are likely, in fact, to be the first affected.

By the same token, the rest of the world cannot ignore the unique contribution of small island developing States to global sustainability, through their rich biodiversity, their vast areas of marine resources and their coral reef systems.

The text presented to this session by the Commission on Sustainable Development calls for assistance to those small States in meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities arising from globalization and trade liberalization. It also asks that the international community take more account of the particular environmental and economic vulnerability of small States as called for at Barbados.

The text also calls for the international community to provide new and additional financial resources.

That resolution is 10 years old; 10 years on, the need continues. We have not done enough. We do not need to search for new issues. The key constraints facing small island developing States have already been identified for us, particularly their economic and ecological fragility. We can certainly look at new partnerships, at new ways of working together, but there is no getting around the need for more effort in targeted capacity-building; for additional finance; for transfers of environmentally sound technology; and, of course, for improved coordination.

New Zealand has long had a particular concern for the situation of those States through our Commonwealth and other connections with the island countries of the South Pacific, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. More than half our bilateral official development assistance is directed to addressing their development needs. In the last year or so, not least as a result of the role my colleague The Honourable Simon Upton played in chairing the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, we have seen the need to put additional official development assistance resources into tackling some of the emerging challenges for those small States: work for better defining and quantifying their vulnerability; support for regional programmes to address growing pressures on water and waste management; and building capacity to deal with legal and governance issues.

I take the liberty, in conclusion, of quoting from an address made by The Honourable Tuala Sale Tagaloa, of Samoa, at the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development last April. After reflecting on what has been achieved to date under the Barbados Programme of Action, The Honourable Tagaloa said,

> "And so, in a spirit of true cooperation let us take the necessary steps to discharge our responsibility to this planet, to each other and to future generations. And let us once again send a powerful message to the world's peoples on the great possibilities that exist when joint action is undertaken with a sense of common purpose and partnership".

That is the challenge we face now.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Haiti.

Mr. Longchamp (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Some five years ago in Barbados, on behalf of our Governments, we adopted the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in keeping with the spirit of the Earth Summit and the commitments contained in Agenda 21. Appropriately, this twenty-second special session has been convened a few months from the end of the second millennium to appraise the progress made and identify the obstacles encountered and ways to overcome them.

I note with satisfaction the growing importance that our Governments, international organizations and civil societies attach to sustainable development. There is awareness that the balance between man and the planet is one of the major challenges facing human conscience today. Unfortunately, we must note that despite a considerable number of initiatives, the danger of an ecological disaster is not yet to be ruled out, especially with regard to the small island developing States.

These States, most often tiny territories, suffer generally from a lack of natural resources and often face the problem of demographic explosion, which gives rise to an intensive exploitation of the scarce resources available. Most of these islands are exposed to natural disasters. In the Caribbean archipelago, in particular, our States are regularly swept by hurricanes and cyclones. We are still suffering the effects of the unrepaired damage caused in 1998 by hurricanes Georges and Mitch. In the same region, volcanic eruptions are a major danger. We still remember the disaster that the island of Montserrat experienced two years ago, which for about two weeks almost emptied the island of its population.

We also note with sorrow that desertification is gaining ground in many areas. People deprived of water and other vital resources for survival continue to swell migratory flows, thus destabilizing the social balance in towns and especially in large cities. While progress in democratic systems and the stability of political systems are considerably reducing the number of political refugees, here at the turn of the century the number of economic and environmental refugees is unfortunately growing at an alarming rate.

For our part, in spite of real structural weaknesses, the Republic of Haiti believes that the rights to education, health and life in a safe and healthy environment rank among fundamental human rights. Thus, we have applied the commitments of Agenda 21, and Haiti is proceeding at its own pace in sustainable development. At the institutional level, the creation in 1995 of a Ministry for the Environment, a Ministry for the Status of Women and a Secretariat of State for Population has provided new

momentum for initiatives for the protection of biodiversity and the development of human resources.

We recognize that these are very limited initiatives, because of the precariousness of resources allocated and the impossibility of achieving sustainable development through actions that are geographically isolated and not very well coordinated. This is why the Republic of Haiti intends to actively participate in the various regional and global mechanisms of cooperation for the realization of the commitments outlined in Agenda 21.

As President of the Council of Ministers for the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), I welcome the regional commitment to support public and private efforts for the protection and conservation of the environment and the natural resources of the Caribbean Sea.

At the second summit of the Association of Caribbean States, in Santo Domingo in April of this year, our heads of State or Government agreed to support the efforts of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) so that the Caribbean Sea would be declared a special zone in the context of sustainable development. This sea is a truly invaluable asset for the sons and daughters of our particular region, and we cannot neglect the vital need to denounce the risks of its ecological deterioration. The region continues to be used for the transportation of toxic and nuclear wastes, which cruelly endanger flora, fauna and human life. Considering the serious repercussions that this kind of deterioration can have on the rest of the planet, we hope that this special session will invite Governments, organizations within the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the international community in general to support this Caribbean initiative in the context of sustainable development.

Human beings have to be at the centre of any sustainable development programme. It is from this viewpoint that the Haitian Government advocates that special attention be given to the most vulnerable sectors of our populations. In this regard, the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is of great significance in the context of globalization, in which a number of societies are threatened by marginalization.

We congratulate the Commission on Sustainable Development on the considerable work that it has already carried out, and the Government of Haiti expresses the wish that the Programme of Action will be expanded in all its dimensions for the greatest welfare of humankind in general and for future generations in particular.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Souef Mohamed El-Amine, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Comoros.

Mr. El-Amine (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the Assembly and pay tribute to the Commission on Sustainable Development for its efforts in arranging this meeting.

The attention given to small island developing States has led to the organization of a number of meetings because of the need to promote sustainable development on a global basis that takes into account the unique economic and environmental conditions that characterize the economies of small island developing States.

The Rio Conference and the Barbados Conference obviously fall within this framework. While we recognize that the promotion and practice of sustainable development have become a global priority, we must also agree that the concrete application of these principles in small island developing States is crucial, in the light of the interdependence and close connection between development and environment.

Accordingly, problems such as the continuing deterioration of our marine, coastal and forest environments, energy problems, the vulnerability of these States to external impacts on their economies, the lack of resources, the dumping of toxic waste in the seas and oceans, the effects of globalization and trade liberalization and ecological changes must be constantly borne in mind when we deal with the question of sustainable development. In short, the small island developing States represent a particular case, both from the environmental standpoint and from that of development.

It is clear that we all share the same concerns with regard to the problems facing our countries. My country, the Comoros, shares these environmental concerns. A detailed environmental analysis demonstrates that the Comoros, because of the volcanic nature of its terrain, its small size and the fact that it is made up of many islands, have a particularly unique character is reflected in the diversity of landscape and the rich biodiversity. The national policy on the environment supports the integration of the environmental dimension within the

country's political process and economic development, in order to ensure sustainable and rational management of existing resources and to define and strengthen sectoral policies.

However, these efforts come up against serious problems of all kinds. Because of this, our environmental policy is aimed, first, at ensuring sustainable and rational management of resources. It also is aimed at defining and strengthening sectoral policies in the realm of territorial development, revision of the landholding system, defining a water policy and defining and applying a policy of sanitation and waste management. We must also improve the legislative tools and regulations to develop regional and international cooperation along these lines, ratify all international and regional conventions on the environment and provide for a follow-up mechanism for national policies in these areas.

Within the context of the application of this policy, my country has adopted a support programme for associations for protecting the environment and a waste management programme. Other actions are also under way.

In the area of maritime security, a regional initiative has brought about a project for cooperation among the countries of the Indian Ocean Commission with regard to rescue at sea and the anti-pollution campaign. This second element is as essential as the first, because the Indian Ocean, a pre-eminent ocean of transit, sees international oil trade plying between the Arabian peninsula and the Cape of Good Hope, and these maritime routes endanger the countries of the region, in particular those situated in the Mozambique Channel.

In addition, a regional plan of action has been established to deal with all the vicissitudes of natural disaster. All these initiatives bring together the necessary conditions for the protection of the environment, with a view to sustainable development. To achieve this, a concerted effort on the part of the State, communities, associations, the private sector and the people is necessary. Moreover, the efforts of our countries must be supported by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to make sure that we have access to financial machinery and adequate financial resources, as well as to strengthen our capacity, particularly in the development of our human potential.

Another area to which we should give attention is that of trade, in particular with regard to agricultural products. Trade in this area is in a precarious situation because of a decline in the terms of trade.

We would request that new negotiations within the World Trade Organization in the area of agriculture should take account of the particular needs of this group of countries in order to prevent liberalization from having a negative impact on their capacity for sustainable economic development.

Future generations depend on the guarantees that we will give them in terms of commitments to be accepted and implemented so that they can aspire to a better life.

May I again express my deep appreciation for the initiative in organizing this meeting in the hope that it will justify the hopes of our respective peoples.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Mr. Aziz (Pakistan): Mr. President, we are indeed delighted to see you presiding over this important special session of the General Assembly.

The peculiar structural and ecological characteristics of the small island developing States make them unique and, at the same time, vulnerable. Their small size, isolation and vulnerability to forces of nature often create insurmountable problems. These factors also magnify the development challenges being faced by these States. The support of the international community thus becomes a vital element in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

This was recognized by the Rio Conference, which led to the holding of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994. Pakistan actively participated in both these Conferences and is deeply committed to the realization of their goals.

The Barbados Programme of Action provides a blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States. While the small island developing States have made serious endeavours to implement the Programme of Action, the international community has, unfortunately, lagged behind in fulfilling its commitments.

It is not merely the issue of financial assistance that leads to the dependence of the small island developing States on global action. The threats of climate change and rising sea level are posing problems which are far beyond the control of these countries and can have disastrous consequences for small islands. The situation becomes worse due to the fact that most of the population of these countries lives in the coastal zones.

The problems of small island developing States are further compounded by the shortage of fresh water, pollution, overfishing, the high cost of energy, certain undesirable consequences of tourism and rising poverty.

The small island developing States have taken various measures to meet these challenges. Yet for them, the prospects are always uncertain. A major hurricane or a cyclone can destroy years of labour in hours. A paradise can be turned into a wasteland in virtually no time.

Long vulnerable to the forces of the sea, small islands are now bracing themselves against the gathering forces of globalization. Small islands are easily swamped by global economic upheavals or recession because they rely on international trade more than most countries, as their limited land mass and resources require that they import virtually everything. To finance these imports, they need to raise foreign exchange through the export of services such as tourism, but in a global recession tourism is one of the first sectors to suffer a serious decline. This leads to a chain reaction that affects all other activities on the island, including industry and trade.

The continued erosion of trade preferences, combined with the steady decline in official development assistance, is having a major impact on the sustainable development prospects of these countries. Most of them recognize that they must restructure their economy. This is, however, a long-term prospect involving large investments and the retraining of major segments of the labour force.

We also need to promote the development of a comprehensive vulnerability index and its objective application. Such a vulnerability index should fully take into account the special circumstances and vulnerability of these countries.

Another important concern of these countries relates to the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive waste. It is more than evident that the sentiments expressed in the Barbados Declaration have not been followed by deeds. This lack of action, particularly in the area of climate change, threatens the existence of a significant number of these countries.

Pakistan lends its full support to the initiatives for the further implementation of the Programme of Action contained in the final document of the special session. We also urge the international community, especially the developed countries, to take all necessary measures to promote the sustainable development of these countries.

Unlike other countries, for the small island developing States sustainable development is also a matter of physical survival. Yet they have no control over it. They are dependent on global action. We should make every effort to help these countries achieve what we all believe is critical for their survival and prosperity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Maraj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Maraj (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the final session of the General Assembly of this millennium as well as over this special session on small island developing States. Permit me to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, members of the Alliance of Small Island States, to the United Nations community of nations.

Today the question we must ask is, are the small island developing States any better off now than they were five years ago, when we adopted the Barbados Programme of Action? Is their future any more certain? Have the threats which hung over them been removed or lessened? These are the questions we must answer honestly if this special session is to have any real meaning.

The truth is that small island developing States continue to be marginalized from the global economic mainstream. The processes of globalization and liberalization have further accentuated the divide between the rich and the poor of the world. Today over 1.3 billion people are in the category of the poor, earning less than $1 per day. Millions of children have no access to education, millions more have no access to proper health care, and a significant percentage of the deprived of the world belong to the small island developing States. This is the reality since Barbados.

The myth of the level playing field continues to reign, while the reality of small island developing States explodes that myth. How can a small developing island with few or no resources and a small population compete with industrialized continents with large internal markets, advanced technology, market access and sophisticated financial systems? There has been no real attempt during the last five years to deal with this dichotomy.

Three hundred and twelve projects were submitted by small islands at the donor meeting last February, of which 22 were submitted by Trinidad and Tobago. To date, we have had no firm pledges by the donor countries for the implementation of these projects. Is it expected that the small island developing States themselves will mobilize these resources?

The Barbados Programme of Action states that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development, and thus significant attention must be given to projects that will enhance the quality of life in small island developing States. The smallness and vulnerability of small island developing States necessitate that special attention be paid to population issues, education and training, and health for effective human resource development. In these areas, the position of developing States, especially that of small island developing States, continues to be bleak, as much of the social deprivation in the world lies in developing countries.

The statistics show that more than 880 million people lack access to health services; 2.6 billion lack access to basic sanitation; more than 850 million adults are illiterate; more than 260 million children are out of school; and about 840 million people are malnourished. Has a global conscience developed during the last five years to deal with these seemingly intractable problems of underdevelopment? The answer is that callous indifference continues.

The 1999 United Nations *Human Development Report* has been moved to say, on page 7, that

> "The relentless pressures of global competition are squeezing out care, the invisible heart of human development"

and that

> "National and global governance have to be reinvented — with human development and equity at their core."

We of the small island developing States fully share this view. Let us make a strong call at this meeting for the reinvention of global governance, and let us hope that it reverberates throughout the world.

The threat to the security of small island developing States increased during the last five years. Today, our very democracies are under attack. Our coastlines are often open and not well protected, and our limited resources make it impossible for us to provide adequate security measures. We are therefore very vulnerable to predators such as drug traffickers, money launderers and terrorists.

Because of geography, island States of the Caribbean are particularly vulnerable to illicit drug trafficking. It is precisely this problem that led The Honourable Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to note recently that the illegal drug trade undermines democracy; it corrupts officials and institutions; it destroys future generations. It is a cancer eating away at the vitals of our societies and will make narco-democracies of our nations unless our people and nations stand close together and wage war against it.

The countries and territories of the Caribbean have been targeted by this enemy as a transit point for the international trafficking of drugs. Resources that should be allocated to ensuring proper health care, education for children, feeding of our citizens and employment generation have to be diverted to fighting the hydra-headed drug lords. Small island developing States feel particularly powerless in the face of this evil.

Trinidad and Tobago is dismayed at the lack of firm commitment on the part of the international community and donor agencies to live up to the obligations undertaken a mere five years ago in Barbados. There is little but the tedious reaffirmation of commitment, and doubts have arisen as to whether any resources will be forthcoming. Small islands do not bear responsibility for global warming and climate change, yet we are the ones who suffer most. It is our islands which will disappear from the face of the earth if nothing is done by those responsible for this threat to humanity.

The efforts of developed countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases are most inadequate. There is clearly a callous indifference to the preservation of the global ecological balance, and this disregard continues in the face of the dramatic climate changes and

the horrendous natural disasters that we have been experiencing.

Trinidad and Tobago is proud of the fact that in 1993 it introduced on the agenda of the Caribbean Community the idea of opposing the trans-shipment of nuclear and other hazardous wastes through the Caribbean Sea. It is a sign of the continuing disrespect for the small island developing States that this practice continues, even though it has been made very plain that a single accident could totally obliterate our small nations. The threat to our society has increased over the last five years as more and more of these dangerous shipments traverse the Caribbean Sea.

The Caribbean Sea has a unique biodiversity and is a highly fragile ecosystem. It is due to the importance of the Sea for the economic well-being and sustenance of present and future generations, as well as their cultural heritage, that the Caribbean Heads of Government, at their last meeting held in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in July 1999, endorsed the proposal to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

These are not issues for small island developing States alone. One would be foolish or naive to think that geographical separation, economic prosperity or military might could insulate any country or group of countries from the effects of so many millions of people in the world living in poverty, and a large number of the world's community on the brink of either utter economic collapse or ecological devastation. Because it has been done so many times before, it is now almost trite to call for decisive action. One can only hope — and with diminishing hope — that as a new century approaches there will be the dawning of a new realization that this is indeed a global problem of major proportions. All of humanity is threatened.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): It is indeed a pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. My delegation is confident that you will lead our deliberations to a fruitful conclusion.

Bhutan, as a small, landlocked, developing country, is here to express our solidarity with and support for the concerns and well-being of the small island developing States. We share many of the same development aspirations, as well as a deep commitment to protecting the global environment. The small island developing States, which constitute over 25 per cent of the United Nations, form a large and important part of the international community. Rich in biodiversity, they are also guardians of a large part of the surface of our galactic island against ever-spiralling threats. Their views and needs must receive the full attention of the international community.

In the five years since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, serious efforts have been made by the island States at the national and regional levels in implementing the Programme of Action. Much of the effort has been centred on integrating sound environmental management into planning sustainable development practices. However, a number of critical constraints impede the implementation of many of the Barbados objectives. Small island developing States on their own are simply unable to shoulder the vast responsibility that falls upon them — the guardianship of the essential global public goods, without increased support from the international community.

We have long agreed that global warming would create serious problems for all countries of the world. For the low-lying small developing countries the outcome could be devastating and is already clear to us. Yet the progress on the negotiation and implementation of the measures for addressing global warming continues to be slow for want of greater international efforts and commitment.

The reports before us state that the marine environment around many small island developing States is deteriorating, aggravated by spills of hazardous wastes, sand extraction, seabed mining and transport of nuclear materials. While the catastrophic implications for the environment and economies of the concerned States are clear, we cannot be unmindful of the larger and long-term consequences for human society in general.

Global economic integration has been a powerful mechanism of growth and development for many countries in the past decade. But for many of the small islands and other small developing countries whose economies are based on few key sectors such as tourism, fishing and mono-crop agriculture, the benefits of globalization have been minimal. Good infrastructure, communications and human resources are important

prerequisites for participation in the global economy. Development of these sectors remains a major challenge in many developing countries.

It is apparent that international support has fallen short of the commitments articulated and foreseen in the Barbados Programme of Action. The continued declining trend in official development assistance will not make it any easier to fulfil these objectives. It is our hope that this special session of the General Assembly will not only review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, but will also be an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to its implementation.

We live in a single global community. The challenges and problems faced by small islands are not theirs alone. It is incumbent upon us, as responsible members of the international community, to take care of our environment and safeguard the future of mankind through the sustainable development of all our nations and peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Domingo Siazon, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, we decided to have a common agenda to deal effectively with the related problems of environment and development. We also recognized the need for global partnership, for none of us could accomplish the job alone.

The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted at the conclusion of the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994, is a document that builds on what we agreed in Rio. It is a plea for sustainable development, particularly that of small island developing States, that deserves the fullest support of the international community.

The Barbados Programme of Action calls for national, regional and international action in 14 priority areas. These range from sectoral concerns such as freshwater, climate change, biodiversity, marine resources and tourism, to cross-cutting issues such as human resource development and the financing and support needed to put the plan into action.

The Philippines fully identifies itself with the aspirations of small island developing States, for it is a nation of about 7,000 islands, many of which are small. Small islands are vulnerable to the capricious onslaughts of nature's fury. They are especially vulnerable to the threat of rising sea levels, and they immediately feel the impact of erratic changes in weather patterns.

Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, for instance, caused extensive damage in the Caribbean. The recent El Niño phenomenon hit the Philippines hard, causing its agricultural sector to decline by 6.7 percent and its gross domestic product to recede by half a percent last year. Tsunamis killed more than 2,000 people and destroyed homes and crops in Papua New Guinea.

Small islands also typify the challenges being faced by many developing countries, such as air and water pollution, vanishing forests, land erosion, depletion of coastal and marine resources, underdeveloped transport and communication facilities, and insufficient human resource development. High rates of population growth and unsustainable tourism development compound their environmental problems.

In the five years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme, tangible progress has been achieved in certain key areas of work. In the conservation of biodiversity, for instance, most small island developing States have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity, and a number of them have begun to prepare country studies on biodiversity and national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

The Bahamas Biodiversity Data Management Project is a landmark achievement. A global review of biodiversity in small island developing States has also been carried out by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has conducted a review of the uses and status of trees and forests in land-use systems in the small island developing States.

The small island developing countries, however, continue to face inadequate financial and human resources for sustained efforts to address not only biodiversity but also other urgent issues of sustainable development.

Turning to the problems of coastal and marine resources management, much remains to be done to address the problems of beach erosion, loss of shoreline, degradation of coral reefs and mangroves, and marine and coastal pollution. The inadequate capacity for efficient disposal of mounting waste compounds these problems. There is also a tremendous need to strengthen

the monitoring and surveillance of fish stocks in the areas around small island developing States, so as to ensure sustainable management of the living marine resources on which their economies depend.

The small island developing States remain highly vulnerable as regards their energy requirements. With most of them totally dependent on imported petroleum for their commercial energy needs, sharp increases in fuel prices stress their economies in a big way. The recourse to wood for household fuel, coupled with deforestation due to logging or conversion to agriculture, exacerbates their already serious soil erosion and freshwater supply problems. They need enhanced technical, managerial and financial assistance to make the necessary investments in indigenous renewable energy resources.

Inadequate transport and telecommunications facilities continue to make life difficult for small island States. Public and private monopolies perpetuate a sad situation in which telecommunications costs are high and international shipping and air services are infrequent and of poor quality. More investment in these sectors — obviously, from foreign sources — is required if these States are to participate and benefit from world trade and development.

Small island developing States may be remote, but they are not far enough away to be unaffected by the sweeping tide of globalization or the changed economic fortunes of other countries. The Asian financial crisis, for example, has caused a significant drop in the number of tourists visiting the Pacific islands. Like all other developing countries, they, too, need to build the capacity to overcome the challenges of our interdependent world.

Small island developing States are responsible members of the community of nations. They acknowledge that their sustainable development is principally their own responsibility. Battling the vagaries of nature that are unique to them is not their gravest adversity; it is a challenge they accept. It would be truly tragic if we were to withhold the special attention and support that they deserve.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): The Danish Government associates itself with the statement made by Finland on behalf of the European Union.

We welcome this important review of the Barbados Programme of Action. It is a welcome opportunity for the international community to discuss the concerns of small island developing States. The international community has an obligation to assist in meeting the specific needs of small island developing States. These needs were acknowledged in Agenda 21 and further articulated in the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the Global Conference on Small Island Developing States in 1994.

Denmark recognizes the special vulnerability of small island developing States. Such vulnerability is the consequence of, among other things, their small, open economies, their fragile ecosystems and the negative environmental impact of human activities on these ecosystems, as well as their susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change. There is broad political interest in these issues in Denmark. Only two weeks ago a major international non-governmental organization conference was held on the isle of Aerø. The topic was renewable energy and small islands.

Denmark welcomes the renewed efforts by small island developing States and by the international community to implement the commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. In our view, three issues are important in relation to the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action: first, the continued deterioration of the marine environment and its long-term effects on marine biodiversity and human health; secondly, the difficult issues regarding freshwater and land degradation on small island developing States; and thirdly, the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, which erode the very basis of agricultural production.

Efforts to foster an enabling environment to assist small island developing States in addressing these issues so as to achieve sustainable development should be given priority. However, the most important questions are how to improve the situations of women and the poorest target groups in particular and how to assist the least developed small island developing States.

To follow up on the Barbados Programme of Action, Denmark is actively supporting activities carried out by multilateral environment and development programmes in partnership with small island developing States. In our dialogue with the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP), we attach great importance to their cooperation with small island developing States, in particular with a view to improving the situation for women and the poorest target groups.

The Lomé Convention is the centrepiece of cooperation between the European Union and small island developing States. For the period from 1996 to 2000, the European Union is committing over 1 billion euros in development assistance to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. High priority is given to supporting women and the poorest target groups. The European Union is by far the most significant development partner for small island developing States.

In addition, Denmark is working together with small island developing States in a number of ways that support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Let me mention our institutional support, in the fields of climate change and sustainable energy, to the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and the University of the South Pacific.

In our cooperation with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, we are supporting the regional coordination in the field of climate change and thus strengthening the negotiating capacity of small island developing States. Through the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and the University of the South Pacific, we are supporting the development of efficient planning tools for energy-sector planning in small island States with a view to increasing the use of renewable energy. The project is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme and the UNEP Collaboration Centre in Risø, Denmark. It is important to add that these activities have been initiated by the small island States themselves and that they are part of a regional cooperation effort that already exists and therefore does not necessitate new institutions.

We are supporting development work in Maldives through our mixed credits programme. We are supporting the delivery to and installation in Male power station of a new diesel generator. This will lead to an increased energy supply in Maldives and, at the same time, to the reduced utilization of an old, environmentally degraded power station. At Fuah Mulaku, a remote island in Maldives, we are supporting the construction of a harbour. The project is a key element in the national development plan to increase the economic sustainability of the island.

Those are a few examples of the kind of partnership we are engaged in. I would like to conclude by once again welcoming this opportunity to focus attention on the specific issues pertinent to small island developing States. This is an important opportunity for all of us to renew our commitment to the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to adopt a new political declaration to that effect.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Franck Loy, Under-Secretary for Global Affairs of the United States of America.

Mr. Loy (United States of America): It is my pleasure to represent the United States at this important review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted five years ago in Barbados. It is also my pleasure to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga into the United Nations family.

The United States enjoys a long-standing and close relationship with small island States, in no small part because of our shared commitment to the principles of sustainable development. We too are, in part, an island State, with small islands represented in our delegation. Island States have expressed a strong desire to take charge of their economic future and to plug in, if you will, to the new global economy. The Barbados Programme of Action is a truly global effort to pursue sustainable development. We want to make that vision a reality.

We are well aware that globalization strikes fear in the hearts of many. Yet small island States have much to gain from it, just as the United States and many parts of Europe, Asia and Latin America already have gained from it. Clearly, though, some developing nations have gained more than others. Some common characteristics that we think are shared by those that have benefited the most from globalization include good governance, strong and active participation in international deliberations, adequate levels of investment and a clean, well-protected environment.

One of the things we have come to feel strongly about is that economic growth, social development and environmental protection are not discrete goals. They are intertwined, and they must be pursued as a whole, or none will be achieved fully.

As we begin to examine the progress we have made in realizing the Barbados commitments and what actions we should take in the future, I would like to focus on the United States approach to three issues that are relevant to the sustainable development of island States. I shall first talk about climate change. Island States are not just vulnerable to the effects of climate change; for many of them it is the transcendent — the life-or-death — issue. Some have already begun to see some impacts; we have had reports that rising sea levels have begun to cause salt-water encroachment into drinking water supplies.

It is a fact that small island States have the most to lose from climate change and that they are among the least able to do anything to stop it. They more than any other States need an international agreement that sets up an effective system under which all nations of the world are encouraged to take actions designed to arrest climate change. Many island nations have already taken initiatives to reduce their own emissions, and we commend them for their leadership.

We too are working aggressively to make our society more energy-efficient. The Clinton Administration secured $1 billion this year for an array of domestic climate-related technologies and proposes to invest $1.37 billion in those technologies next year. I can say with utter conviction that the President of the United States is totally and fully committed to finding ways, both domestic and international, to reduce the threat of climate change.

I turn next to fisheries. Coastal and high-seas fisheries are vitally important resources for island nations. It is imperative that all fishing nations use those resources sustainably. We think that the most important step countries can take towards that end is to ratify or accede to the United Nations Agreement for the International Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Agreement to Promote Compliance with Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas. Those treaties together form a vital framework to promote the achievement of sustainable marine fisheries.

Happily, many small island developing States have signed the fish stocks Agreement. In fact, of the 24 States that have ratified it, 13 are small island developing States. We congratulate them. Further, we call upon countries that have not ratified or acceded to the FAO compliance Agreement to do so soon.

Now a word on coral reefs. One of the great ecological tragedies of recent years is the continuing deterioration of coral reefs around the world. These ecosystems are critical to island nations: they generate tourism, they provide productive fisheries, and they act as buffers against storm damage and coastal erosion. Earlier this year we released a report on the fate of coral reefs, which points out that in 1998 coral reefs around the world suffered the most extensive and severe bleaching and mortality in the modern record. Our report concluded that a rise in sea surface temperatures induced by global warming appeared to be a significant factor. In Barbados, the United States Government proposed the establishment of the International Coral Reefs Initiative. Since then, I am happy to note, it has become an important forum for addressing the question of threats to coral reefs.

Those are but three of the many pressing issues that bear upon the progress of island nations towards sustainable development. We have to work together to address them. We need to find ways to attract the interest and the resources of the private sector. The islands must, with the help of the international community, build their own capacity to face these challenges. We look forward to our continued friendship and to our continued cooperation on these important issues.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Valentino Martelli, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Martelli (Italy): Let me begin by welcoming the three new States Members of the United Nations: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mrs. Hassi, Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, took the floor yesterday on behalf of the European Union. Italy fully supports her statement.

From the beginning, Italy has strongly supported the Alliance of Small Island States. We have enormous experience in problems related to the environment. Our vast coastal area and small islands are characterized by fragile ecosystems. For example, Venice, one of the world's most beautiful cities, is permanently threatened by high seas. Italy's friendship with the small island States has grown because we share so many features and problems. We are ready to put all of our expertise at their disposal. We will continue to be a strong advocate

for the needs of small island States in all forums, including the European Union and the United Nations. Together we have fought and won many battles for democracy and mutual respect, for transparency and participation, against closed doors and exclusion.

Over the past two decades, international public opinion has expressed growing concern over the deterioration of our planet. Small island developing States are one focus of this concern. People in my own and other countries are demanding concerted international action on a global scale. They want effective measures that will give a better life and a better world to future generations. The international community must do everything possible to prevent the recurrence of tragedies like those involving the *Exxon Valdez* and the *Amoco Cadiz*.

Italy has repeatedly voiced its concern over the immense damage that humankind is inflicting on our planet. We recklessly endanger human lives, important lands and beautiful towns, seas and landscapes. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, everything is perfect in the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man. Like climate change, sea-level rise, land degradation and drought, natural disasters also endanger our lives and the lives of small island developing States. These threats also increase the ranks of the poor. But poverty can and must be eradicated. Italy stands ready to do its part.

The Barbados Programme of Action, which promised so much, has not led to a substantial increase in aid resources to small island developing States. Nor has it been sufficiently implemented. More resources and better coordination are needed. Donor and recipient countries must pledge to pursue the same goals. Let us make the most of this special session in order to do this.

Italy has long stressed the vulnerability of small island developing States to climate change and sea level rise. We are aware of our responsibilities towards small island developing States in their quest for sustainable development. Whenever natural disaster has struck, Italy has been on the front line with emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance. Last year, we started a programme aimed at fostering the access of small island developing States to advanced techniques of climate change simulation. We strongly supported the workshop on clean development mechanisms in the Marshall Islands last July. We held a training course on energy planning for small islands to improve capacity-building in the environmentally sound use of energy, the exploitation of renewables and the pursuit of sustainable development.

I am glad to inform the Assembly that Italy is contributing half a million dollars a year to a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization project for the preservation of the cultural heritage of small island developing States.

Finally, I am pleased to announce here that the Italian Government has just approved financial contributions to two programmes aimed at the sustainable development of small island developing States: one is phase two of the project for the global network of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET); the second is a United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs programme to build capacity in public administration and civil service and foster regional cooperation in the Caribbean small island developing States.

The dawn of the new millennium represents a unique opportunity for us to implement long-overdue changes in the types of action we undertake. The process as a whole must be streamlined. We need to tackle simpler projects and ensure that assistance is delivered more quickly and efficiently. Our contributions should not go to feeding bloated bureaucracies and overstaffed organizations. To have a more direct and substantial impact, our focus should be on small centres and local communities.

Let us move from empty words to hard facts. The time for action is now. The place is here. We need to agree on a realistic and effective review and appraisal of the Barbados Programme of Action. We need to give small island developing States all the support that they rightly deserve.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Clement Leo, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu.

Mr. Leo (Vanuatu): I am delighted to have this opportunity to make a brief statement on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Five years after the first Conference for small island developing States, which was held in Barbados in 1994, we are gathered together here again to review progress and achievements in our efforts to achieve sustainable

development. We have jointly confirmed our common will, expressed in the commitments made in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 and at the small island developing States Conference in Barbados in 1994, to ensure the promotion of peace, development and the protection of the environment.

The need to pay special attention to the environmental and economic problems hindering the sustainable development of small islands was explicitly recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, the programme of action for sustainable development, adopted at Rio, identifies this as one of the programme areas where new approaches for management and development at the national, subregional, regional and international levels are required.

We recognized that the difficulties of small island developing States cannot effectively be solved by individual island States without active international cooperation and assistance. The recommendation of the Earth Summit to convene a conference to consider the specific problems of small island developing States was seen as appropriate for designing a comprehensive programme for the solution of the problems of small island States.

We also recognized that the focus of the Barbados Programme of Action is on promoting sustainable development, with the recognition that frequently stressful environmental conditions and relatively narrow resource bases are among the main factors limiting the development options of small island developing States and jeopardizing our rich and diverse cultural heritage. As small island developing States, our continuing development critically depends on the full exploitation of our marine and terrestrial resources.

The Republic of Vanuatu shares the same environmental problems as other small island developing States. Our small size, isolation, relative paucity of resources and geographical locations, where natural disasters are common, affect our development and the natural resources that support that development. Our island country is generally vulnerable and is exposed to periodic hostile environmental conditions and events such as cyclones, landslides and volcanic eruptions. The relatively uniform climate and soil conditions usually limit the agricultural production of our country to a few crops and make us depend heavily on importing other products.

The environmental aspects of the issues under review are numerous. Despite the difficulties that we are faced with, the Republic of Vanuatu has given very special attention to certain areas in implementation of the Programme of Action to promote efficient protection of resources in the following specific areas.

As regards climate change and sea level rise, using the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Project (PICCAP), we have established a national climate change committee, known as the National Advisory Committee on Climate Change (NACCC), to provide technical advice and implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Committee draws on expertise within key Government departments. Initial PICCAP initiatives focused on enhancing the understanding of climate change issues and future scenarios. We have now completed our National Communication for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be presented at the Conference next month in Bonn.

As regards management of waste, we have received assistance from the European Community and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme to develop our waste management characterizations and minimization policies and strategies. This assistance will help us to develop our national waste management strategies for the urban and the rural areas and to put in place a legal framework for sustainable waste characterization and minimization.

As regards coastal and marine resources, support is being provided by regional and bilateral agencies to promote the protection, restoration and sustainable use of our coral reefs and associated ecosystems. In 1997, we participated in the International Year of the Reef and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), campaigns which resulted in the development and promotion, at all levels of the community, of the conservation and protection of coral reefs, which in their own right are the protectors of our fragile marine ecosystems, on which we are very much dependent for food and as a source of our economic development.

As regards freshwater resources, this problem was approached through a national survey of the country's biological diversity. Technical assistance was provided to aid the survey of the freshwater of Vanuatu. The results of this survey have indicated that Vanuatu has many more new species of freshwater wildlife than was known.

Using the information from this survey, a freshwater management policy will be developed to take account of the diverse freshwater ecosystem of Vanuatu.

In the area of biodiversity, within the overall framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, through its technical advisory services, is assisting the Republic of Vanuatu with Global Environment Facility funds so that we can formulate and implement our national biodiversity strategy and action plan. At the same time, we recognize the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, which has enabled Vanuatu to establish areas of significant natural heritage that are protected and managed by the resource stakeholders. We appreciate very much the assistance that has been provided and are looking forward to receiving continued assistance to enable us to develop other areas of similar significance.

As for legislative mechanisms, with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank, the Republic of Vanuatu has prepared environmental and resource management legislation that takes account of environmental issues of concern to Vanuatu. We have also reviewed our sectoral legal mechanisms in line with the principles of sustainable development. This review includes the development of a forest policy.

In 1994, Vanuatu acceded to the Montreal Protocol and the Vienna Convention, and we have also recently signed the United Nations Convention on combating desertification and drought. We recognize that these are areas of real concern to our island country, and we are making every effort — bilaterally and through the Convention secretariat — to fulfil our responsibilities as provided for in the Convention. This is an area in which we require technical and financial inputs from the organizations involved in order to shoulder those responsibilities.

As regards institutions and administrative capacity, recognizing that the capacities needed to implement the Programme of Action are inadequate, we have made efforts with our bilateral partners to give training courses to our technical officers so that they can provide skills training in technical areas such as climate change and waste characterization and minimization. These are areas which at present we do not have the technical and financial capacity to deal with ourselves. At the same time, we also appreciate the Government's efforts under the comprehensive reform programme. Under this programme, the Government, with its commitment to good governance and transparency, has made hard and painful decisions to reduce its workforce so that it can be economically sustainable.

While in Vanuatu progress has been made, although slowly, since the 1994 adoption of the Programme of Action, a number of obstacles must be overcome for the Programme to be efficiently implemented. The actions we have identified are improving the mechanism for the implementation of the priority programmes and goals, consistent with those of the United Nations system; improving the alignment of United Nations system activities with those of regional organizations and Governments; developing improved performance indicators for measuring, in collaboration with other countries and regional organizations, the effectiveness of the implementation of international agreements and decisions of agencies of the United Nations system; and ensuring comprehensive participation by States and relevant stakeholders in the development of regional initiatives and agreements.

In conclusion, we note with interest that the small island developing States donor meeting, which was held in February this year, was a step forward that could be further pursued in order to address the bilateral, regional, subregional and international issues. We should pursue further efforts by the small island developing States and the donors to implement the decisions that have been made. While Vanuatu did not participate in that meeting, our priority areas highlighted above reflect the needs for which further technical and financial assistance is required. We need the support of donors in our efforts to address these needs.

As we come to the end of this century, we would like to see the collaborative sustainable development efforts that small island developing States and donor countries have already begun continue into the next millennium. These efforts should be strengthened and carried out practically by all parties.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Castaneda-Cornejo, Chairman of the delegation of El Salvador.

Mr. Castaneda-Cornejo (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate and welcome the new Member States of our Organization: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga.

By the adoption in Barbados in 1994 of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the international community put to the test the global alliance for sustainable development that was agreed at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janiero in 1992. At both of these Conferences the island States and the international community were urged to tackle problems comprehensively and to recognize that small islands possess characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable and, therefore, deserving of international cooperation so that they could meet the growing challenges of globalization and economic interdependence.

Now, five years later, we can recognize that some positive changes have occurred in the environmental field, although much remains to be done in order to resolve the enormous, complex problems of the subregion. These past years have provided us with experiences that are worth exploring in depth. Among them we should highlight efforts on the part of the Caribbean countries to carry out joint plans to adapt to climatic change; a regional project to monitor the rise in sea level in 11 countries of the Pacific; the design and implementation of joint measures to promote sustainable tourism; the adoption of a strategy related to the International Coral Reef Initiative; and the establishment of new policies regarding fishing and the negotiation of regional fishing agreements.

Recognizing the importance of these efforts, we believe it necessary to draw attention to the fact that bilateral and multilateral assistance to small islands has been tending to diminish since 1994, when major economic activity was generated as a result of the Barbados Conference. As a result of this declining trend, many of the vulnerable island economies continue to feel the impact of global financial difficulties and the pressure to focus on short-term growth to the detriment of long-term sustainability.

Like the small island States, the Central American countries, and El Salvador in particular, are vulnerable to natural and environmental disasters, especially to storms, to the effects of El Niño and La Niña and to other natural disasters, such as hurricanes George and Mitch, which caused tremendous damage to the productive infrastructure of the region and great loss of human life. Therefore, we believe it is of enormous importance to redouble the efforts of the international community to deal, as a matter of priority, with the relevant projects and initiatives that are being discussed in various financial forums and forums of international cooperation.

Another of the important challenges confronting small island States is related to the fact that, because of their size and population density, small island developing States experience enormous difficulties in managing waste. The water treatment facilities are inadequate, and this contributes to waste water being dumped in the sea, creating a vicious circle that has a negative impact on these States' two major industries — tourism and fishing. These industries also demand particularly careful management so as to avoid the deterioration or exhaustion of the resources on which they depend.

The deterioration of this problem further aggravates the freshwater situation, because many small island States suffer from a severe shortage of freshwater and have few remedial options. There is a limited amount of surface water and groundwater, particularly on volcanic islands and atolls, which, together with growing urbanization, increases demand and contaminates supplies.

This disheartening scenario also falls within the context of globalization and trade liberalization, which threaten profoundly to alter the economies of many small island States and to impede their efforts to promote sustainable development. Recent events in the process of trade liberalization indicate that special trade preferences, which permit small island States to export their traditional agricultural produce to the developed countries at protected prices, will soon come to an end. Without these preferences, the small island States have scant hope that their produce will be able to compete in world agricultural markets with the large-scale exports of other countries. We must therefore consider the Barbados Programme of Action and address with due diligence the issues of trade and sustainable at this special session.

In conclusion, the Government of El Salvador, as a full member of the Association of Caribbean States, reiterates its support for the draft resolution recognizing the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development. We consider it to be fundamental in the search for multilateral solutions to the problems that will confront small island developing States, particularly in the Caribbean, in the building of sustainable societies in the new millennium.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Norman Pino, Chairman of the delegation of Venezuela.

Mr. Pino (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express its pleasure at the convening

of this special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

At the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, the international community reiterated its recognition of the fact that small island developing States are encountering genuine obstacles in achieving sustainable development and need everyone's support. At its seventh session, the Commission on Sustainable Development also came to the conclusion that the full, effective and long-term implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action required the international community's steadfast and determined cooperation.

However, in spite of the achievements that have been made since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States five years ago, the international community has not acquired the effective financing mechanisms that would make sufficient, new and additional financial resources available to small island developing States, in accordance with the provisions of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action. Indeed, we note with concern the yearly decline in official development assistance at a time when the developing countries are being called upon ever more urgently to participate in international trade on a footing of equality.

That is why we believe it is important to facilitate the integration of small island States into the world economy by strengthening their capacities, promoting the transfer of technology and encouraging private investment in order to help them meet the challenge posed by the globalization of markets.

Venezuela, with a coastline of 3,500 kilometres and more than 70 islands and islets in the Caribbean, attaches particular importance to that region. Our commitment to the small island States of the Caribbean has been unswerving and is reflected in various collaborative and cooperative projects in the fields of energy, finance, environment, technology, trade and culture, both bilateral and in the framework of the Group of Four, together with Mexico and Colombia.

In spite of the difficulties affecting the Venezuelan economy in the years following the adoption of the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action, the Government of Venezuela has striven tirelessly to make a special contribution in solidarity with the island States of the Caribbean. In this context, we have launched our Cooperation Programme for the Caribbean, aimed specifically at addressing the needs of the area on a bilateral basis. This Programme has been active in various sectors, such as emergency assistance in natural disasters, infrastructure development and the construction of housing.

Similarly, through the Energy Cooperation Agreement for Central America and the Caribbean, better known as the San José Agreement, we have pursued with Mexico our development assistance work in the Caribbean subregion, recognizing its particular needs. Haiti, Barbados and Jamaica currently participate in this programme, which offers preferential financing conditions for projects chosen by the beneficiary country in accordance with its national priorities. On 3 August, this programme was renewed on similar terms for an additional year, marking nearly twenty-five years of Venezuelan involvement in this work.

That is why we join the appeal of the small island developing States to this Assembly to undertake a broader and more consistent effort of development cooperation. Now that their particular vulnerabilities are internationally recognized and our work is guided by a consistent platform for action, it is time for the international community to unite its efforts.

In this context, it is worth noting that Venezuela, which also recognizes the special needs of the economies of the area because of their small size and insular nature, has undertaken to open its trade on a non-reciprocal basis that lays the bases for a long-term integration effort. Similarly, we have systematically promoted a joint solution sensitive to the special characteristics of the local economies with respect to banana exports, aware that globalization and the rules of free trade should not hinder the processes of development.

Venezuela is a founding member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), in the context of which we have cooperated in particular in the fields of tourism, trade and transport, which are deemed to be priority areas for the development of the region. Venezuela is also an observer member of the Caribbean Community, with which we also have a trade and investment agreement.

Venezuela considers that the design and implementation of sound regional development strategies in the Caribbean will allow them to exploit more effectively their human, natural, financial and institutional

resources and the opportunities to be opened up by the process of globalization. That is why we support the recognition of the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development, taking into account the peculiar and specific characteristics of the Caribbean Sea and promoting the husbandry, management and sustainable development of its resources for the social and economic well-being of the inhabitants of the region.

We also support the initiative to establish the Caribbean sustainable tourism zone, which is being promoted by the Association of Caribbean States. The ACS Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in April in the Dominican Republic, produced a commitment to forge greater political and commercial unity among members in the twenty-first century. Venezuela will lend its wholehearted support to this process and is compelled by conviction and force of circumstances to make the Caribbean region one of the main focal points of its foreign policy.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the implementation of the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to the His Excellency Mr. Hans Linton, Chairman of the delegation of Sweden.

Mr. Linton (Sweden): Sweden welcomes this opportunity to participate in the review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, held in the context of continued international efforts to promote sustainable development. Yesterday we heard the intervention of the Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, talking on behalf of the European Union, a speech which Sweden, of course, fully supports.

For small island developing States, the necessity to mainstream environmental concerns in all areas into the overall political agenda is clearly visible, and the concept of sustainable development presents a concrete and practical challenge. We have learned during this process that the impact of environmental degradation on small island developing States is very real and often carries immediate socio-economic effects. I am well aware of these facts, being accredited to 10 Caribbean countries.

In this context, the Rio principle of common but differentiated responsibility of States deserves to be highlighted again because development is not a static condition, but rather a process which involves changing roles and evolving relations within the international community.

Therefore, Sweden welcomes the determination demonstrated by small island developing States participating in this special session to mobilize resources, to facilitate participation and partnerships and to promote sustainability in their development efforts.

Sweden has a strong commitment to continued international development cooperation, and we are among those four countries that meet the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. To us, therefore, the steady decline in the global volume of development assistance is alarming, particularly in the context of worsening living conditions for the poorest people in the least developed countries, some of whom live in small island developing States.

Swedish development cooperation is aimed at achieving a higher standard of living and fairer conditions for poor people, to ensure that their fundamental needs are met and that they are involved in political decisions which determine the way society develops. One of the specific objectives is to promote the far-sighted management of natural resources and consideration for the environment. Therefore, environmental sustainability is an integral part of all Swedish development cooperation.

Sweden also contributes to the work of the Global Environment Facility, as one of its donors and as a member of the board of directors. The Global Environment Facility currently co-funds projects in more than 25 small island developing States, primarily focused on conserving and restoring biodiversity and on issues related to climate change, including its root causes. For example, in the Republic of Cape Verde, the energy and water sector reform and development project is promoting renewable energy technologies such as wind and solar energy, intended to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. In this project, co-funded by the Global Environment Facility, the private sector is involved in building local capacity for supplying, maintaining and installing wind-power generation systems.

As underlined by the representative of the European Union in her statement yesterday, partnerships such as this, with the private sector as well as with non-governmental organizations, can provide unexplored

possibilities in efforts towards sustainable development. Sweden will continue to promote such partnerships, in the various multilateral institutions through which our development assistance is channelled, for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

My country looks forward to continued international cooperation and improved coordination in supporting the political commitment expressed at this special session of the General Assembly.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Volkan Vural, Chairman of the delegation of Turkey.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): Five years have elapsed since the Barbados Conference. It is now clear that our initial predictions concerning sustainable development in small island developing States have proved to be correct. These States represent some of the most vulnerable areas of the globe. They face more than their fair share of natural and environmental threats, but with less breathing space. These huge problems are clearly beyond the capability of such vulnerable countries to be tackled alone. It is true that globalization and trade liberalization present unprecedented opportunities for most countries. Nevertheless, the small economies of small island developing States are liable to face difficulties in realigning their economic structures before suffering a sharp downturn. Many fear that globalization might be a tidal wave, albeit in a different form.

Small island developing States have certainly made significant progress towards meeting the priorities and objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action. They have carried out far-reaching economic and social reforms. These reforms have affected and influenced changes in the relationships between people and their management of the natural resources around them.

Following the momentum generated at the Rio Summit, we are happy to note that small island developing States assumed a new way of thinking in addressing the concept of development. Today Governments, business, non-governmental organizations and other major groups, as well as citizens themselves, and especially women, are all taking part in this process. It is quite heartening to note that many small island developing States score highly on the United Nations Development Programme human development index. We feel that this testifies to the sound policies that such countries follow. It is essential that their efforts should be supplemented with international assistance. It is equally important that the small island developing States complete their national sustainable development strategies. We feel that appropriate regional strategies would be useful. Such strategies should identify priorities on both regional and subregional bases.

Experience could be drawn from existing programmes, such as the Global Environment Facility. In this context, the involvement of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with small island developing States through its stewardship of the environmental conventions, UNEP's regional seas programme and the global Programme of Action provide a valuable basis for enhanced cooperation with small island developing States.

Tourism in the twenty-first century will be the planet's biggest industry. Along with its phenomenal growth and size, the tourism industry will also have to take on more responsibility for its extensive impacts. It is generally recognized that the small island developing States are more vulnerable to the impact of tourism than other destinations. More economic and technical support is therefore needed to ensure that the development of tourism in these States is sustainable. The income generated by tourism should also be distributed fairly in the communities. Natural, environmental and cultural heritage are among the foundations of a prosperous tourism industry. Priority should be given to the protection and preservation of these assets.

Turkey supports action aimed at securing improvement in early warning systems and in the capacity of the small island developing States to respond to climate change and natural disasters. New waste management facilities will have to be put in place as soon as possible to avoid further degradation of coastal and marine resources. Improving the assessment, planning and integrated management of freshwater resources and land is urgently required. Resources will have to be mobilized for the generation of renewable energy. We must assist the current development efforts of small island developing States in more sustainable directions.

Turkey has over 5,000 miles of coastline. It derives a significant portion of its income from tourism. It is susceptible to similar environmental, economic and social pressures. It faces natural calamities of its own. We are therefore most sympathetic to the needs of the small island developing States.

Turkey stands ready to contribute its fair share in the provision of adequate, predictable, new and additional

financial resources. We are aware that time is of the essence.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Amraiya Naidu, Chairman of the delegation of Fiji.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): It is an honour and a privilege to address this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly to review the progress of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We endorse the statements of the Group of 77 and the Alliance of Small Island States made on behalf of small island developing States.

The daunting challenges faced by small island developing States in our quest for sustainable development are real and well known not only among the small island developing States but also among all members of the international community; this resulted in the Barbados Declaration five years ago. We are now taking stock of the commitments that we all agreed upon, but, regrettably, very little progress has been made on the implementation of the Programme of Action. It has received little support from the international community. In our view, the developed countries should not and must not continue to be spectators, having initially agreed on the Programme of Action.

My delegation notes with concern that adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources in support of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action have not been provided by the international community. We are mindful that the overall continuing decline in official development assistance will impede the effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, and we urge the developed nations to honour the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance to help small island nations meaningfully in their pursuit of sustainable development.

Fiji is facing a number of challenges in the short and medium term in its efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development. The challenges include the following: increasing the level of private investment and creating employment opportunities for thousands of school leavers annually entering the job market; increased competition of commodity prices in international markets; reducing the national debt; adjusting to the realities of a loss of trade preferences — preferences which have created significant economic and social development; and mainstreaming disadvantaged groups in the development process. To respond to such challenges, Parliament has approved a new strategic plan for Fiji for 1999-2001. The plan highlights the strategies to achieve sustainable economic and social progress in the twenty-first century and points to positive indicators for sustainable economic recovery.

Sectoral policies have been realigned towards sustained natural resource utilization, development of human resource-based industries, provision of infrastructure and other essential utilities, and additional impetus on social services, such as education, health and housing. Other initiatives include poverty alleviation, mainstreaming of women in development, rural and urban development and disaster management.

We find it very difficult to effectively implement all plans for sustainable development when forces of globalization have an adverse impact on our economy because of market access, erosion of special trade preferences and lack of national capacity to operationalize the sustainable development goals of my Government. For small island developing States, special trade preferences mean the survival of our economy, which, according to the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), is a violation of free trade. Let me say here that the solution to the sustainable development of small islands and, indeed, the solution for the developing and the developed world alike, is not free trade alone, but also the ability of our global trading system to develop rules and mechanisms for countries to fairly share the benefits of global trade. My delegation therefore calls on the United Nations system and the international community for an equitable rule-based international trading system. In spite of all our efforts, the terms of trade are not always in our favour, which could be further compounded by the coming into force of the rules of the WTO.

The uniqueness of the small island developing States cannot be overemphasized in terms of our smallness, remoteness and proneness to the destructive forces of nature, including hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones, earthquakes, sea level rise and other climatic changes. The effects of natural disasters increase the Government's expenditure through rehabilitation programmes, costing millions of dollars which could otherwise have been better utilized in a variety of ways to address natural resource conservation and environmental concerns for sustainable development objectives.

We support the call made for restrictions on the transboundary movement of toxic and hazardous cargo across our waters, in accordance with the Basel Convention and the Barbados Programme of Action.

The restructuring of our economy to cope with globalization is not simple. We appreciate that the participation of the private sector and civil society is essential. Unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to attract the desired level of foreign investment, as do other, larger, developing countries. For the sustainable development of small island developing States, one avenue to widen our resource base is the exploitation of ocean resources.

In this connection, my delegation calls on the international community to support our efforts in oceanic scientific research and database development; increasing access fees for our fisheries resources; the promotion, assessment and monitoring of commercial investments in catching, processing and marketing to increase ownership and management of commercial fisheries activities by our people; policing and protection of our ocean resources; and research and transfer of technology to assess the effects of the exploration and exploitation of non-living resources on coastal and marine environment, to name just a few.

Fiji has endeavoured all along to fulfil many of its obligations in the last five years, within its capacity, as required under the Programme of Action. The only way forward now for us is for the developed partners to make a firm commitment with renewed vigour and a sense of purpose for the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

We therefore urge the United Nations and the donor countries to assist small island developing States in achieving their sustainable development goals.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hubert Wurth, Chairman of the delegation of Luxembourg.

Mr. Wurth (Luxembourg) *(interpretation from French)*: Luxembourg welcomes the convening of this special session. Yesterday the Assembly heard the statement by the representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, which expressed a commitment that we naturally share regarding the matters now before us.

Five years have passed since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, and this is the time for reviewing what has been done and for providing new momentum.

Luxembourg, as a small country, understands the situation of small island developing States and the very acute sense of vulnerability felt by populations that are surrounded by water and that have few resources.

Of course, my country is landlocked and has no coast. Nevertheless, a small entity essentially lives a life of its own whether it be landlocked or surrounded by water. It has to define its relationship with its environment, break out of its isolation and avoid being submerged or simply forgotten. This is really an exhausting undertaking and yet, in addition, the country must also develop. Being located on an important international shipping route can help economic development, but it can, at the same time, make things more difficult because of the management responsibilities and the dangers inherent in such a situation.

Small island developing States must be very careful in defining and implementing their choices, for they cannot afford to make mistakes. The challenges they face certainly offer opportunities as well, especially in the area of tourism, but limited resources and geographical constraints mean that they are intrinsically fragile and will probably remain so. It is therefore perfectly justifiable to highlight, in the case of insular States, the difficulties and questions they face given the dangerous natural phenomena and the harmful economic developments that can occur so that we can better understand them and devise new forms of cooperation. Such States have very specific fears, and these fears often have a global dimension.

What we do here will have a particular impact since our discussions have involved a very large number of delegations, even though many of them have very different concerns.

Awareness and consideration of other people's problems and unfamiliar situations are the main assets of our Organization.

We must fight ignorance and indifference. A good understanding is essential to give effect to actual, real solidarity. From this standpoint, it is crucially important to establish the vulnerability index advocated by the small island developing States.

Luxembourg plans to be part of this solidarity. We are committed to the undertaking made at Kyoto on the greenhouse effect. At the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Lydie Polfer, stressed our Government's decision to increase our official development assistance. In the year 2000 Luxembourg will reach the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, and in a few years this could rise to 1 per cent.

Of course, a small country cannot spread its limited resources too thin, so we have decided to limit to 10 the number of countries with which we will have bilateral programmes. Of these, the Republic of Cape Verde, a small island developing State, is the first of our target countries. Now is certainly not the time to go into the details of our bilateral cooperation, which arose out of the fact that there are many Cape Verdean citizens in Luxembourg. I simply wanted to draw attention to this contact between two small countries situated so far from each other on different continents — a contact characterized by warm and promising human relations.

All Members of the Organization must explore ways in which they can contribute to the realization of the common objectives we are discussing. In describing our approach, the delegation of Luxembourg has sought to demonstrate its attachment and commitment to ensuring the success of the objectives outlined in Rio and Barbados.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Samhan, Chairman of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I have the honour to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session and its special session.

I should also like to express our gratitude for this opportunity to participate in the special session devoted to the review and assessment of the Barbados Programme of Action on small island developing States.

We fully agree with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as with other statements and proposals aimed at finding ways to succeed in the implementation of the Programme of Action that was adopted at Barbados in 1994. We believe that the holding of this special session offers a unique occasion to the international community to examine the urgent economic, development and environmental needs of the small island developing States.

Furthermore, we can determine the qualitative obstacles and the essential challenges that stand in the way of national, regional and international efforts in order to help these States address their development, social and environmental problems. This can be done within the framework of the objectives that were agreed upon in Agenda 21 and the Programme of Action for sustainable development.

The world now recognizes that small island developing States and coastal States are in a special and unique situation. They represent the most vulnerable developing economies due to the smallness of their territory, their geographic isolation and the scarcity of their natural resources, such as fresh water and energy sources.

These States have to face constant natural catastrophes and pollution of their environment, as well as negative climatic changes, rising sea level, land erosion, population growth, poverty of their inhabitants and numerous pressures on the use of their natural resources. Although some States have tried to adopt measures in order to implement the Barbados Programme of Action, national efforts and action have not been sufficient and have achieved only limited results because of the States' modest financial and technical resources and their growing marginalization as a result of the growing economic gap between developing and developed States. This is particularly the case given the globalization and liberalization of trade and financial markets. This last factor has deprived these States of the ability to compete on an equal footing with other States and to take advantage of international economic developments.

We have given greater importance in our national development priorities to the development of our vast islands and coastal areas, to the protection of our natural reserves and to the tackling of the negative impact on our coastlines of environmental degradation, climatic changes and sea level rise.

We are concerned about the illegitimate practices of the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to the three islands of the United Arab Emirates, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa, that Iran has occupied since 1971, particularly because Iran is carrying out military manoeuvres, stockpiling prohibited arms and building

illegal military and civilian installations. All of this has caused marine and land pollution on these islands and in our territorial waters and the waters of the Gulf. Given that the practices of Iran are in violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourliness, we call on Iran to end its occupation of these three islands and to respond to the peace initiative under way so that peace and stability can prevail in the region and the world.

In this respect, we would like to express our concern about the pollution of the environment resulting from the illegal use of commercial vessels that travel through our waterways in the Gulf. We ask for regional and international cooperation in order to preserve this area and its natural resources. This area is both a source of energy and a unique strategic space for international commercial and economic relations.

The United Arab Emirates has tried to strengthen cooperation with other island States with common interests and with which we have friendly bilateral relations. We exchange expertise, experiences and information with them and have extended financial, technical and humanitarian assistance in order to allow some of these States to face the natural catastrophes they have been hit by. We also have financial programmes to develop natural and human resources and to diversify the national sources of income of these countries, thereby allowing them to integrate into international trade and economic relations on an equal footing with other countries.

We believe that the small island developing States must formulate the national strategies necessary to face their existing social and development problems and to develop their natural, human, financial and cultural resources by reforming their national economic structures and systems. But we would like to stress the need for developed and donor countries and regional and international financial institutions to increase official and unofficial loans and assistance to these States. We also call for the cancellation of foreign debt and for helping these countries acquire environmentally sound technologies, information and expertise through preferential and soft loans. These can be used to deal with their economic and environmental problems and to provide social, educational and health services to their populations. This would enable these States to prepare an appropriate environment that can attract foreign investment and give their products access to world markets.

Finally, we hope to be able to reach a consensus regarding the initiatives necessary to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alyaksandr Sychov, Chairman of the delegation of Belarus.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The development of the world economy and international economic relations has become particularly dynamic in this last decade of the century. Liberalization of international trade, the refinement of economic structures at the micro level and the swift development of international financial markets and cross-border communications and information exchanges have all created the phenomenon we call globalization. While creating unprecedented opportunities and prospects for further advances by States in terms of economic growth and social progress, these processes have also increased the vulnerabilities of States — primarily of the less developed States — and have given rise to a number of social and economic problems.

In this connection, the Government of the Republic of Belarus regards as very timely the convening of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly to review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This group of countries faces particular problems caused by natural disasters.

The reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action have noted a range of achievements made by the small island developing States. Some countries have moved ahead in the area of sustainable development. In other countries, social and economic progress has been thwarted by narrowly focused economies, underdeveloped national macroeconomic management institutions and a shortage of trained personnel. Given all their problems, there is a need to increase international assistance to these countries. The Republic of Belarus supports the efforts of the Governments of the small island developing States to implement the Barbados Programme of Action and to get onto the sustainable development track.

Our country has long-standing economic, scientific, technical and cultural ties with many of these countries. We are interested in further developing our ties and broadening cooperation for the benefit of countries and peoples, thereby also helping to implement the Barbados

Programme of Action. Belarus, in firmly and consistently implementing the principles of sustainable development, has acquired some experience in this area and would be willing to share it with small island developing States.

Our delegation is also pleased with the current prospects for international cooperation to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. The global conferences and summits convened under the auspices of the United Nations in the 1990s, the 1994 Barbados document and the implementation process at the national, regional and international levels have shown that the process of implementation has been fairly dynamic and that donor States have been fairly active. This inspires some hope for the implementation of the key goal of the Programme of Action.

The international community's efforts should focus on strengthening the national economic and scientific potential of small island developing States and on helping them to diversify and to achieve structural transformation of their economies. It is important to create favourable external conditions for resolving the most acute socio-economic problems, including poverty reduction, and also to implement national programmes to reduce the threat of natural disasters and to offset the consequences of global climate change.

One of the most important tasks is integrating the small island developing States in the world economy on an equitable basis, taking account of their particular geographical situations and of the specific socio-economic factors affecting them. All of these aspects of our cooperation should be reflected in the final document of this special session. We would hope that the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations Secretariat will devote continuing attention to the process of implementing the Barbados Programme of Action.

The problems facing the small island developing States should not get lost among the many other issues that the United Nations deals with. The Government of the Republic of Belarus will, for its part, continue to provide ongoing support to small island developing States as they endeavour to implement the Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bernd Niehaus, chairman of the delegation of Costa Rica.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation warmly welcomes the holding of this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly for the review and assessment of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of the small island developing States, adopted in Barbados in 1994.

Costa Rica recognizes and appreciates the contributions of small developing States to the international community. We are convinced that all countries, small and large, can and should contribute actively to the well-being of humankind. The greatness of nations should not be measured in terms of their size or wealth but in terms of their spiritual greatness and their contributions to the peace and happiness of their citizens.

Costa Rica, which is also a small developing country, has fraternal ties to small island States. Small States are custodians of important natural resources. We have great biodiversity — rich coral reefs, a variety of marine-bird colonies, an abundance of mangroves and wetlands, and colourful bays and inlets alive with flora and fauna that are unique in the world. The preservation of this wealth is the particular responsibility of the small States.

Nevertheless, the responsibility is not ours alone. The international community as a whole should cooperate with our efforts to protect the environment. In this respect, obligations are shared but differentiated. That is why we advocate the creation of an international system that will reward those that protect the environment and punish those that contaminate and destroy it — an international system in which the developed countries will share their resources with the developing countries, in order to allow us to fulfil fully our obligation to protect the environment for the benefit of all of humankind.

The development of the small developing States is not only possible but necessary. We recognize that each State has the primary responsibility for seeking its own development. However, certain structural obstacles and conditions make it difficult to achieve this just objective. In this respect, we advocate a fairer and more balanced economic and commercial order that will give all nations access to the benefits of the globalization process and provide small developing countries with more options for reaching equitable commercial agreements, thus ensuring their products greater access to the markets of developed countries.

We consider that in order to support the development of small States, we need to establish open systems of commerce that will allow trade and investment to serve as the impetus for economic growth.

The small developing States, whether they are islands or not, are profoundly vulnerable. We frequently suffer from nature's wrath in the form of hurricanes, earthquakes, the El Niño phenomenon and climate change. To give a recent example, we in Central America were victims this year of Hurricane Mitch, which resulted in great loss of life and material damage. The destruction caused by that hurricane has left deep scars in the economies of the Central American nations and undermined the living conditions of our people.

Small States are also very vulnerable to the fluctuations of the world economy, be it because of the contagion effect of foreign economic crises, an increase in the price of basic commodities such as oil, or a decline in the prices of our products. Small economies do not provoke economic crises, but we suffer their adverse effects.

Additionally, our dependence on one or several products makes us even more vulnerable and, unfortunately, we have not received the necessary support to face these challenges. We believe that we need to establish international financial mechanisms that will provide a rapid, flexible and adequate response to the different types of crises faced by small States. In particular, as was pointed out by the President of Costa Rica, Mr. Miguel Angel Rodríguez, in the statement he delivered during this fifty-fourth session, my country is in favour of the creation of a contingency fund that will serve to respond effectively to the financial emergencies of the smaller and more vulnerable States.

Likewise, Costa Rica supports firmly the creation of a vulnerability index that will objectively measure our fragility and allow us to devise better strategies for responding to future crises.

Finally, Costa Rica has the honour of co-sponsoring the draft resolution recognizing the Caribbean Sea as a special development zone given the unique geographic, ecological, economic and social conditions of the Caribbean Basin.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, chairman of the delegation of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me, on behalf of my Government, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of this special session of the General Assembly for the review and implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. We are certain that under your able guidance, our proceedings will reach a successful conclusion.

Five years after the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we are concerned to see that economic and social problems and global environmental deterioration, far from being resolved, are instead becoming increasingly acute. Confronted with the current complex world situation, the efforts of the small island developing States to become integrated into the new international relations are being increasingly limited. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing among and even within countries, and marginalization, poverty and unemployment are also increasing. The international order is unjust and unsustainable, and the neo-liberal globalization imposed on us can lead only to an economic disaster with repercussions that will be particularly serious for small island developing States.

How can we talk about taking action to preserve or improve the environment in countries where poverty forces citizens to struggle for their everyday survival? In the environmental sphere, this process is leading to the relentless and almost always irreversible destruction of nature, to the accelerated wasting and depletion of important non-renewable resources and to the deterioration of the land, air, groundwater resources, rivers and seas as a result of an absurd, chaotic and totally unsustainable model of consumption.

The particular circumstances of our economic and environmental vulnerability have imposed on our countries new challenges relating to our marginalization and isolation as well as to the erosion of trade preferences and the loss of markets for our exports. The international community must urgently adopt measures that will allow our countries to become integrated sustainably into the world economy.

My Government is aware that in order to safeguard life on our planet we must live and pursue development in a way that is commensurate with our limited economic and natural resources. That is why the commitments that we undertook at the Barbados Conference in 1994 remain very important to us and have constituted basic elements

in the definition of our national development policies and the creation of our national environmental strategy. Despite the fact that Cuba has been subjected for almost four decades to an unrelenting and genocidal economic, commercial and financial blockade by the Government of the United States, made worse by extraterritorial laws such as the Helms-Burton law, our country is carrying out, as a matter of priority, a policy designed to achieve sustainable development.

Cuba has been dealing with a serious economic crisis that it is currently in the process of overcoming systematically and steadfastly. That crisis has not led us to abandon our environmental goals and principles or to relinquish our search for sustainability. Our country accords great importance to the efforts carried out at the regional level in order to support the Barbados Programme of Action. Recent natural disasters that have affected the small island developing States in various geographical areas have reinforced our belief that we must develop and consolidate regional cooperation mechanisms that will allow nations to overcome the consequences of such disasters. The recent adoption of a regional cooperation agreement for the Caribbean relating to natural disasters, carried out within the framework of the Association of Caribbean States, is a clear demonstration of our decision to find solutions on the basis of integration. In this respect, we must highlight the adoption of the declaration on sustainable tourism in the Caribbean. Cuba fully supports the initiative presented by the Group of 77 and China to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, and we urge all Member States to join this effort.

It is obvious that without the effective support of the international community we will not achieve much in the way of results from the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We have said before, and will continue to do so, that it is necessary for the developed countries to face up to the ecological debt they have incurred with humanity and to comply with their financial commitments with regard to official development assistance. It is imperative that donors provide adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources and carry out environmentally friendly technology transfers in favourable conditions.

I should like to repeat that it is our firm intention to continue to make all possible efforts in order to attain the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action at the national level as well as to contribute — as we have been doing — our experience and direct support so that the Programme will become a reality for our region and for all the small island States. We hope that this special session will confirm the importance of fully implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and that we will make decisions that will allow us to continue to do so more effectively.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): The subject of this special session, which concerns the development of small island States, is very close to Sri Lanka's heart. Sri Lanka is an island; it is not a large island, but a small island. Indeed, I have often wondered why Sri Lanka is not itself a member of the group known as the Alliance of Small Island States. I am told that the reasons may be that the surface area and population of Sri Lanka are somewhat larger than those required by the relevant criteria.

Many of the questions presently within the focus of the attention of this special session of the General Assembly relating to factors that affect the sustainable development of small island developing States also preoccupy development planners in Sri Lanka. They include energy dependence on costly oil imports and the necessity of alternative sources of energy; the proper management of tourism in the light of the needs of the environment and of a precious cultural heritage; the fragility of coastal ecosystems, including the special circumstances of coral reefs; sea-water seepage in low-lying coastal areas into sources of fresh water — streams, rivers and aquifers — for household and agricultural use; a rise in the level and temperature of the sea, with serious consequences for coastal communities; and torrential rainfalls at the wrong time of the year. The adequate management of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf, of course, raise problems of great magnitude for Sri Lanka, as they do for numerous other small island developing States.

Yet we are informed that there is also the awesome reality for the very low-lying small islands — of which there are many, including Maldives in the Indian Ocean — of rising seas submerging surface areas and, possibly, entire islands. Sri Lanka therefore offers its wholehearted support to the convening of this special session of the General Assembly to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing

States since the adoption in Barbados in 1994 of what has come to be known as the Barbados Programme of Action. It constitutes an appeal — a vast and very moving appeal — from some 40 States Members of the United Nations, first for an understanding of the unique and very difficult circumstances in which the small island developing States find themselves and, secondly, for such assistance as each of their colleague Member States may be in a position to provide.

While Sri Lanka, regrettably, is not in a position to be a source of funding because of other heavy demands on its resources, I would assure the Assembly that Sri Lanka is in a position — and is eager — to extend such other relevant cooperation and assistance as it may be able to provide. The channels for such cooperative assistance are many, including the United Nations system of organizations and, in particular I would think, the process of South-South cooperation. They also include regional organizations such as, in the Indian Ocean region, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, of which the Maldives is a valued member, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, of which Bahrain, the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Singapore are members. There is also the Commonwealth and its secretariat, encompassing a large number of small island developing States that at one time were, like Sri Lanka, colonial territories.

I would hope that through such channels cooperative assistance will flow and will relieve, at least in some measure, the great difficulties of which so many small island developing States have spoken so eloquently at this special session of the General Assembly.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Duminasa Shadrack Kumalo, Chairman of the delegation of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is always a joy and a pleasure, Sir, to see you sitting up there at the head of the General Assembly.

At the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the international community decided to give special priority to the situations and the needs of small island developing States in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This special session provides an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment to the sustainable development of small island developing States. South Africa believes that by building on the progress already achieved, this special session should give further impetus to the effective and successful implementation of the Programme of Action at all levels.

The Barbados Programme of Action provides a firm and comprehensive basis for the sustainable development of small island developing States. South Africa recognizes that these States have made significant progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. However, we also fully recognize the responsibility of the international community to assist these States to achieve sustainable development, in particular by providing adequate new and additional resources for the full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

At the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held at Durban, South Africa, last year, heads of State or Government of the Movement reaffirmed the need for the provision of adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies on concessional and preferential terms, and the promotion of non-discriminatory trading arrangements. In that regard, the ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement which was held last week here at the United Nations, noted with concern that the support of the international community for the implementation of the Programme of Action has been affected by financial and other resource constraints, and by global economic and environmental factors. The meeting of donors and small island developing States held at the United Nations in February 1999 made a welcome contribution in that regard. However, there is a need for concrete follow-up of the results and outcomes of that meeting.

Sustainable development in small islands is complicated by their size, their limited resources, their geographical dispersion, their isolation and their ecological fragility. Global warming and associated phenomena such as sea-level rise render small islands more vulnerable to storms and floods. The frequency and intensity of natural disasters and the devastating effects they have on small island developing States further underscore the vulnerability of those States. In this regard, the organizational arrangements that were established in the course of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction provide a viable framework for international cooperation aimed at natural disaster reduction.

Vulnerability in its various manifestations is obviously one of the main obstacles to the sustainable

development of small island developing States. South Africa believes that the United Nations should facilitate the timely conclusion of a vulnerability index that takes into account the environmental and economic vulnerability of small island developing States. Recognizing the importance of the Barbados Programme of Action in identifying and addressing the problems and vulnerability of small island developing States, heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, at the Durban Summit, reiterated their call for the support of the international community in the implementation of the Programme of Action, including the ongoing initiative to establish a vulnerability index for small island developing States.

The particular constraints on small island developing States make it difficult for them to achieve sustainable development or to benefit from globalization and trade liberalization. Hence, the international system should assist those States in improving their competitiveness, their market access and the diversification of their economies, and in building their capacity for effective participation in multilateral trade. It is critical that the international community, including the monetary, financial and trading system, not only recognize the limitations and vulnerability of small island developing States, but also address them, to facilitate their integration into the world economy.

South Africa welcomes this opportunity to review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We are looking forward to a constructive and productive session under your competent presidency, Sir. This five-year review presents an excellent opportunity for the international community to take stock of where we have achieved success and of what we still need to do to make progress in the future. We should seize this moment.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jacques Baudin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I wish first of all to voice my support for the views stated by His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, who addressed the Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My statement today is first and foremost a message of sympathy and solidarity addressed to the States Members of the United Nations that are part of the Alliance of Small Island States. As a coastal State, with its western coast on the Atlantic Ocean, Senegal is fully aware of the obstacles hampering the progress of small island developing States towards sustainable development. For, like our island friends, we too suffer as a result of phenomena relating to marine and coastal environmental degradation.

Five years ago, the international community, inspired by the principles and commitments of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, adopted the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It recognized therein the specific concerns and needs of those countries and their particular vulnerability because of various factors: climate change, marine pollution, coastal erosion, isolation, disruption of ecosystems, natural disasters, and so forth. All these risks, and phenomena, added to the pressures created by populations being confined in a small area, require urgent mobilization on the part of the international community to ensure the well-being of present and future generations.

The Barbados Programme of Action contains a coherent set of short- medium- and long-term measures that small island developing States, in partnership with the international community, should take in order to reverse trends that have an adverse impact on their efforts to attain the objectives of sustainable development. The Secretariat's reports to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development describe the current state of progress made since the Barbados Conference. My delegation hails the efforts made at the national, regional and international levels to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. In such vital areas as drinking water supply, energy, transport and telecommunications, to mention only a few, significant progress has been made in recent years, varying, of course, from one country to another.

But it is clear that much remains to be done to change the way things are going, to prevent problems that can be controlled, to manage what has been achieved and, thus, to protect small island developing States from the uncertainty of the future. This means increased mobilization of resources. The Secretary-General as stated in his report that climatic change and rising sea levels, biological diversity and waste management are the three sectors where fewest resources have been allocated.

Yet it is undeniably true that these are the areas where the vulnerability of small island developing States is most acute, because these phenomena touch the very integrity of these States, threatening their very existence

as separate physical entities. My delegation endorses the Secretary-General's conclusion calling for additional financial resources to be contributed in the form of official development assistance to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

Five years after Barbados, island peoples are still listening to our debates, but no longer as a passive and resigned audience at a performance where they are merely spectators. Rather, they are now real actors, bold actors, tirelessly playing their part every day in a performance where there is no room for fiction. The gravity and urgency of the questions that we are discussing here are clear to these millions of men and women, because they are matters of survival in the face of rising dangers. In a world of interdependence, the natural beauty of the islands, their cultural wealth, their biological diversity — all of this constitutes an integral heritage that we must all protect, together, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

It is possible to take up this challenge; we have the means. So let us together ensure that at the end of this special session the Barbados Programme of Action will be squarely framed in an action-oriented approach, in the genuine interests of the peoples on whose behalf it was adopted.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

Mr. Gama (Portugal): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the statement of Finland made yesterday on behalf of the European Union.

Five years have passed since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was convened in Barbados. The moment has therefore come to assess the state of implementation of the constitutional charter of this group of countries, the Barbados Programme of Action, and to reflect upon their achievements in recent years, as well as the new challenges they face in coming times.

My Government shares the common goal of the sustainable development of small island developing States and believes in the advantages of their full participation and responsibility in the sustainable management of the world's environment, specifically, with regard to the oceans and coastal environment.

As a country with a considerable coastline and two archipelagos — the Azores, where I was born, and Madeira — Portugal has no doubt about the strategic importance of marine resources for small island developing States. These countries not only represent a valuable development asset to the international community as a whole, but are also charged with significant responsibility for a vast portion of the world's oceans and seas.

In the field of climate change and sea level rise, Portugal expresses its concern for the particular vulnerability of small island developing States and acknowledges the efforts of many of them in developing specific policies and strategies for climate change with the assistance of regional and international organizations.

Since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, growing external factors, other than environmental changes, have been affecting many small island developing States. Globalization and trade liberalization have had an undeniable impact on them, especially on the least developed ones.

Bearing in mind the importance of assisting small island developing States in their sustainable development strategies, with special attention to the least developed and most environmentally vulnerable, my Government has for a long time had a policy of assistance and cooperation with some of them, namely, Sao Tome and Principe and Cape Verde.

We look forward to extending such assistance to East Timor, as we firmly believe it will soon be granted the right to join the group of small island developing States as a new member of the international community of sovereign States. Such assistance is based on the development and implementation of specific integrated programmes aimed at addressing important needs of the recipient countries, as identified by their Governments, such as eradication of poverty; development of human resources and preservation of cultural identity; promotion of social and health conditions; support for social and economic development; support for the consolidation of national institutions; and development and implementation of financial cooperation.

Moreover, in the particular case of Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, my Government is also assisting in the implementation of programmes in the fields of sustainable integrated management of coastal areas and marine biodiversity. In order to have an integrated

approach, Portugal has been implementing these bilateral programmes in the framework of a vaster cooperation strategy developed with other donors, such as the European Union, the World Bank and some agencies of the United Nations system.

Allow me to conclude by expressing my satisfaction with the attention that this special session of the General Assembly is bringing to the specific problems and challenges facing small island developing States. I also take this opportunity to renew Portugal's commitment to further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to express support for the key elements for future action that are identified during this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, as well as support for the new political declaration on small island developing States.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lesotho.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): It gives me great pleasure to address this Assembly regarding the sustainable development of small island developing States. The major issues faced by the small island developing States include vulnerability to the impact and consequences of climate change; ecological fragility and the vulnerability of small economies; the threat of recurrent damage inflicted by natural disasters; remoteness from major trading partners, which gives rise to high international transportation costs; the high cost per unit of social and physical infrastructure on account of low demand and suboptimal use; and inadequacy of investment resources for building critical infrastructure.

My delegation therefore supports the aspirations of the small island developing States to economic development and to improved living standards, as well as the conservation of their natural and cultural heritage for posterity. We ourselves are a small landlocked developing country with a fragile mountain ecosystem, and we are faced with the particular problems posed by lack of territorial access to the sea, which are aggravated by remoteness and isolation from world markets as a result of the prohibitive transportation costs associated with conditions of inadequate infrastructure. Therefore, the Kingdom of Lesotho can fully empathize with the small island developing States' vulnerabilities and peculiar characteristics, which make their difficulties so complex and severe. We feel that the international community needs to embark on further measures to support these countries in areas such as capacity-building, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and resource mobilization.

We all accept the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 as the blueprints for global sustainable development. Building on these blueprints, which affirm the principles of sustainable development and the international community's commitment to them, the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States elaborated the principles and set out the development strategies required to protect the fragile environments of small island States.

My delegation therefore welcomes this review process and the consideration of the further implementation of the Programme of Action agreed to at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994.

The Programme of Action undoubtedly remains a valuable and living framework for the sustainable development efforts being undertaken by small island developing States, and Lesotho notes with appreciation the actions taken by Governments, regional commissions and organizations, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the Commonwealth in support of activities relating to the Programme's implementation.

Adequate financial resources at all levels remain crucial to the continued implementation of the Programme of Action. In this regard, resource mobilization remains a major challenge for small island developing States, and it must be addressed with new resolve by all partners if this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly is to provide the requisite impetus for the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

Regarding the challenges posed by climate change, it is the responsibility of all of us to work assiduously towards the elimination of greenhouse gases. In this connection, the forthcoming fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is an important milestone.

In conclusion, Lesotho has played a significant role in promoting the cause of small developing States, the vast majority of which are island States. The Deputy

Prime Minister of Lesotho was a member of a task force, established by the Commonwealth and headed by the Prime Minister of Barbados, to bring to the attention of the European Union, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization the vulnerability of small developing States in general and of small island developing States in particular. As a result of the analytical work undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat, a composite vulnerability index has been developed and brought to the attention of the bodies that I have just referred to, as well as to the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations. Lesotho therefore remains committed to efforts to alleviate the plight of small island developing States.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Snoussi, Chairman of the delegation of Morocco.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): In spite of the time limit that has been politely imposed upon us, allow me first of all once again to express the congratulations and best wishes of our delegation to you, Mr. President.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was undoubtedly one of the greatest summits of all times. It proved to be a turning point in the search for sustainable development, with the goal of protecting our planet and future generations from the consequences of the unbridled exploitation of non-renewable resources. In this context, it was decided to convene, in 1994, a world conference to examine specific problems of small island developing States and to establish the principles that are now contained in the Programme of Action and to transform these principles into practical policies that allow these States to achieve sustainable development.

The holding of this important special session of our Assembly is surely proof that the international community is firmly committed to working for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action by encouraging concrete actions in priority fields such as climate change, natural catastrophes, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources and, finally, energy and tourism. The international community thus continues to show that it is aware of the specific problems of small island developing States and that it has decided to resolutely support the efforts that these States are carrying out at the national and regional levels.

Small island developing States continue to face obstacles that arise from their geographical situation and that they cannot overcome without greater international cooperation. Their worthy efforts to achieve significant progress in the process of sustainable development are suffering enormously from problems related to their small size; their remoteness; their fragility; their vulnerability to climate change; the high costs of energy, infrastructure, transportation and communications; natural catastrophes; the lack of freshwater resources; and the overexploitation of fisheries. Small island developing States thus deserve the assistance of the international community, especially because they are the conscientious custodians of major parts of the oceans and of the biological diversity of our planet, and because they are involved in a fight to survive climate change and the rise in sea level that could result.

For all these reasons, we call on donor countries to mobilize their resources further in order to reinforce their cooperation with small island developing States by reversing the ongoing decrease in official development assistance as soon as possible and ensuring a greater investment of funds. In cooperation with the beneficiary countries, they should also coordinate their programmes to ensure the fulfilment of established objectives. These island States should be allowed greater access to the resources of the multilateral financial institutions, particularly the Global Environment Facility. Special assistance should also be considered to help these States adapt to globalization and trade liberalization, which have had a negative impact on them, given the decline in preferential trade practices.

In the area of technology and expertise, small island developing States need preferential and concessional access to eco-technologies, particularly to reduce the impact of greenhouse gases, so that they may exploit renewable energy sources, save energy, and reverse freshwater pollution and contamination by salt water.

With respect to the United Nations system, they could activate its participation in the work to establish a vulnerability index for the small island developing States by the year 2000, which would allow the international community to better appreciate the nature of the cooperation required by these countries.

Morocco reiterates its active solidarity with small island developing States and invites them to give South-South cooperation their particular attention. It is a necessary instrument to complement existing mechanisms, particularly in an international environment characterized by the scarcity of financial resources. Our country is willing to share its experience in the field of marine and freshwater resource management with the island States.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.